



# The Routledge Handbook of the Stoic Tradition

Edited by John Sellars

# THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF THE STOIC TRADITION

The ancient philosophy of Stoicism has been a crucial and formative influence on the development of Western thought since its inception through to the present day. It is not only an important area of study in philosophy and classics, but also in theology and literature.

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- Renaissance and Reformation, addressing the impact of Stoicism on the Italian Renaissance, Reformation thought, and early modern English literature including Shakespeare
- Early modern Europe, including Stoicism and early modern French thought; the Stoic influence on Spinoza and Leibniz; Stoicism and the French and Scottish Enlightenments; and Kant and Stoic ethics
- The modern world, including Stoicism in nineteenth-century German philosophy; Stoicism in Victorian culture; Stoicism in America; Stoic themes in contemporary Anglo-American ethics; and the Stoic influence on modern psychotherapy.

An invaluable resource for anyone interested in the philosophical history and impact of Stoic thought, *The Routledge Handbook of the Stoic Tradition* is essential reading for all students and researchers working on the subject.

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# THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF THE STOIC TRADITION

*Edited by John Sellars*

First published 2016  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge  
711 Third Ave, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

The Routledge handbook of the Stoic tradition / Edited by John Sellars.

pages cm. -- (Routledge handbooks in philosophy)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-415-66075-4 (hardback : alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-1-315-77158-8 (e-book)

1. Stoics. I. Sellars, John, 1971- editor.

B528.R68 2016

188--dc23

2015030091

ISBN: 978-0-415-66075-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-77158-8 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo

by Taylor & Francis Books



**To Teddy, on whose birthday, by blind coincidence or divine  
providence, this book is officially published**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks first and foremost to all the contributors for their hard work, in more than one case in quite difficult personal circumstances. Thanks to Tony Bruce for welcoming the volume into Routledge's list, Emma Joyes (formerly of Routledge) for making the introduction, and Adam Johnson for his well-judged balance of patience and prodding in order to ensure that the volume would see the light of day. Thanks also to Elliot Rossiter for his translation of Chapter 11, and to Peter Adamson and Katerina Ierodiakonou for helpful advice. As always I thank Dawn for her help and support, and in this case for reading the entire volume and making numerous suggestions and catching many mistakes. I am also especially grateful to James Thomas for his meticulous copy-editing of the whole volume.

# ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of titles of ancient texts generally follow those listed in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (4th edn). For the sake of convenience those most commonly used in this volume are listed below, along with a few other general abbreviations. Some chapters make use of further abbreviations specific to their content, and these are explained in their notes.

## Ancient Authors

### Cicero

<i>Acad.</i>	<i>Academica (On Academic Scepticism)</i>
<i>Div.</i>	<i>De divinatione (On Divination)</i>
<i>Fat.</i>	<i>De fato (On Fate)</i>
<i>Fin.</i>	<i>De finibus (On Moral Ends)</i>
<i>Nat. D</i>	<i>De natura deorum (On the Nature of the Gods)</i>
<i>Off.</i>	<i>De officiis (On Duties)</i>
<i>Parad.</i>	<i>Paradoxa Stoicorum (Paradoxes of the Stoics)</i>
<i>Tusc.</i>	<i>Tusculanae disputationes (Tusculan Disputations)</i>

Diog. Laert.     Diogenes Laertius

### Epictetus

<i>Diss.</i>	<i>Dissertationes (Discourses)</i>
<i>Ench.</i>	<i>Enchiridion (Handbook)</i>

### Plutarch

<i>Comm. not.</i>	<i>De communibus notitiis (On Common Conceptions)</i>
<i>Stoic. rep.</i>	<i>De Stoicorum repugnantis (On Stoic Self-Contradictions)</i>
<i>Virt. mor.</i>	<i>De virtute morali (On Moral Virtue)</i>

### Seneca

<i>Ben.</i>	<i>De beneficiis (On Benefits)</i>
<i>Clem.</i>	<i>De clementia (On Clemency)</i>

## Abbreviations

<i>Constant.</i>	<i>De constantia sapientis (On the Constancy of the Sage)</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae (Letters)</i>
<i>Ira</i>	<i>De ira (On Anger)</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>De providentia (On Providence)</i>
<i>QNat.</i>	<i>Quaestiones naturales (Natural Questions)</i>

### Sextus Empiricus

<i>Math.</i>	<i>Adversus mathematicos (Against the Professors)</i>
<i>Pyr.</i>	<i>Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes (Outlines of Pyrrhonism)</i>

Stob.  
Stobaeus (where references are followed by WH they refer to the volume, page,line numbers of the edition by Wachsmuth and Hense; where they do not, they refer to book.chapter.section)

## Other Abbreviations

IG	Inwood, B., and Gerson, L. P., <i>Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings</i> (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997)
LS	Long, A. A., and Sedley, D. N., <i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> , 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)
SVF	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> , ed. H. von Arnim, 4 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–24)

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# INTRODUCTION

*John Sellars*

This volume is devoted to the reception and influence of the ancient philosophy of Stoicism in Western thought from antiquity to the present. For want of a better title and for the sake of convenience we have called it a handbook to “the Stoic tradition,” although it would be a mistake to suggest that there existed any kind of continuous tradition of Stoic thought any time after the second century CE. Instead we find a variety of appropriations and resurrections of Stoic ideas along with numerous critical engagements with the ancient Stoic texts that survived beyond the end of antiquity. While each of these encounters with Stoicism may seem isolated and limited when taken on its own, what is striking is just how many of these encounters there have been, primarily in philosophy but also in theology, political theory, and literature. Taken together they show just how widespread the influence of Stoic ideas has been on Western thought. The aim of this volume is to offer a map outlining this impact, drawing on and pointing to a wide range of existing work but also offering some new discussions along the way. The hope is that this volume really will be a *handbook* to the Stoic tradition, giving readers a guide with which to orientate themselves in this complex and multidisciplinary topic.<sup>1</sup>

Planning and preparing this volume has also brought home the fact that it is a handbook in another sense too, for it certainly cannot claim to offer encyclopedic coverage of the impact of Stoic ideas from antiquity to the present. Even if the volume were twice its current size, it would still be foolhardy to claim that every aspect of the topic might have been covered. In short, this is simply a *handbook* to the Stoic tradition, and not an encyclopedia. Nevertheless, the hope is that it contains enough to give the reader the broad contours of the reception of Stoicism and perhaps even prompts further work on aspects not fully covered here.

Readers turning to this volume are (I suspect) likely to fall into two broad groups: students of ancient philosophy curious to learn more about the afterlife of Stoicism; and students of some later author or period who have encountered references to Stoicism and are keen to learn more about the impact of Stoic ideas. For the sake of the second group in particular it may be helpful to open with a few comments on both the doctrines and history of Hellenistic Stoicism.<sup>2</sup>

The Stoics were materialists or physicalists: only bodies exist. In contrast to Plato, they rejected the existence of universal concepts and embraced a form of nominalism. They identified the cosmos with God. God is characterized as either Nature, or the *pneuma*

("breath") within Nature, or the Reason (*logos*) within Nature. Everything that happens within the cosmos is determined by previous causes, yet at the same time God providentially orders events. Periodically the whole cosmos is destroyed by fire and then reborn, creating an eternal cycle. Just as God is the *pneuma* pervading the cosmos as a whole, so a human's soul is the *pneuma* pervading its body. This *pneuma* can be in varying degrees of tension. The *pneuma* in a physical object gives it its cohesion. The tenser *pneuma* in a plant gives it its life. Even tenser *pneuma* in animals gives them perception, and in humans higher levels of tension give consciousness and rationality. Thus the Stoics were able to give completely physical accounts of virtue, wisdom, and reason, all of which are simply *pneuma* in the soul disposed in a certain state.<sup>3</sup>

Stoic ethics begins with the idea that every animal desires its own self-preservation and strives always to preserve its own physical constitution. Consequently an animal will always pursue whatever is good for it (or in accord with its own nature) and reject whatever is harmful. For an irrational animal these goods will be things such as food and shelter; for a rational animal, however, pursuing those things that preserve rationality will also become important, things such as wisdom and virtue. For the Stoics only virtue (*aretê*) is properly speaking good and only vice is properly speaking bad. Virtue may be characterized as an excellent state of mind. Everything else – including wealth, health, and other externals – is strictly speaking an "indifferent" (*adiaphoron*). However, the Stoics acknowledge that while wealth may not be intrinsically good, it is often better to be rich than poor, just as it is better to be healthy rather than ill. Thus they classify wealth and health as "preferred indifferents" (*adiaphora proêgmena*), and call poverty (along with illness) "non-preferred indifferents" (*adiaphora apoproêgmena*). While there is nothing wrong with choosing wealth rather than poverty (indeed, it is perfectly natural to the extent that it contributes to one's self-preservation), it is not necessary in order to live well, and pursuing it should never get in the way of one's pursuit of virtue, which is sufficient on its own to secure happiness (*eudaimonia*). A virtuous life is identified with a rational life and a life in harmony with Nature. Harmful emotions (*pathê*), which hamper our ability to live well and compromise our rationality, are the product of value judgements. They result from judging that external entities or states of affairs are really good or bad, rather than being merely "indifferents."<sup>4</sup>

These are some of the central ideas of Stoic philosophy as we understand them today. However it is important to stress that, even in its original incarnation in Athens, Stoicism was not a fixed set of doctrines adopted by unthinking disciples. The Hellenistic Stoics were philosophers and, like all philosophers, were prone to argue among themselves. The Roman Stoic Seneca famously said "we Stoics are not subjects of a despot; each of us lays claim to his own freedom" (*Ep.* 33.4). Some commentators have tried to downplay this remark, suggesting that as a rule members of all the Hellenistic schools had a strong sense of loyalty to the school's founder, in this case Zeno of Citium (Sedley 1989: 97–9). Zeno founded the "school" in Athens around 300 BCE,<sup>5</sup> after having studied with the Cynic Crates, the Megarian Stilpo, and Polemo in Plato's Academy (Diog. Laert. 7.2). It was not Zeno but, so the story goes, the school's third head Chrysippus of Soli who really developed Stoicism into the systematic body of thought that was to prove so influential. A gifted logician, Chrysippus is reported to have written some 705 books.<sup>6</sup> As Diogenes Laertius put it, "if there had been no Chrysippus, there would have been no Stoa" (7.183). However the idea of a philosophy as an abstract system of thought is very much a modern one, gaining currency in the eighteenth century (see Catana 2008), even if the Stoics did emphasize the unity of their own philosophy (see e.g. Diog. Laert. 7.41–3). In the ancient world and for a long time after, histories of philosophy were written as histories made up of philosophers, not philosophies, with those

philosophers grouped into schools. Thus the story of the Hellenistic Stoa is above all a story about a series of individual philosophers who self-identified as “Stoics.” Initially this reflected the fact that the founding members of the school met at a particular place, the Painted Stoa on the northern edge of the Agora in Athens, but over time came to reflect a commitment to a shared set of philosophical views.<sup>7</sup> Even so, as Seneca’s comment highlights, the Hellenistic Stoics did not agree upon everything and we have numerous reports of later Stoics disagreeing with the supposedly orthodox Stoic view on one topic or another.<sup>8</sup> We might wonder whether there was indeed a core set of philosophical views to which all Stoics subscribed, or simply a set of philosophical family resemblances that meant no one doctrine was sacrosanct, or perhaps just an ever-developing tradition of thought that happened to be able to trace a line of succession back to Zeno’s gatherings at the Painted Stoa. However we might prefer to answer that question, the point worth emphasizing here is that the Hellenistic Stoa was itself a developing tradition of thought, founded by Zeno, strongly identified with Chrysippus, but embracing a wide range of other philosophers too, from Aristo and Cleanthes to Panaetius and Posidonius.<sup>9</sup> Although originally associated with the Painted Stoa in Athens, even in the Hellenistic period we find Stoics active in other parts of the ancient Mediterranean world, most notably Posidonius at Rhodes and Athenodorus in Pergamum.<sup>10</sup> Even in the Hellenistic period, then, Stoicism was a rich and diverse movement, a living tradition as complex as its reception in the periods since antiquity discussed in the chapters that follow. The significant difference of course is that few since antiquity have explicitly described themselves as Stoics.<sup>11</sup>

The living tradition of masters and pupils who could trace their lineage back to Zeno was over by the end of the Hellenistic period.<sup>12</sup> Cicero, who wrote our earliest and in some ways most important accounts of Stoicism, visited Athens at a time when the Athenian schools were more or less at an end, but he did manage to attend the lectures of Posidonius in Rhodes, making him one of the last people to have first-hand knowledge of the Athenian Stoic tradition.<sup>13</sup> The first few centuries of our era saw many philosophers who explicitly identified themselves as Stoics but they now depended on texts for their knowledge of Athenian Stoic philosophy. Even so new Stoic communities developed. Seneca was in close contact with a number of others who embraced Stoicism,<sup>14</sup> including his nephew Lucan, Cornutus, and the poet Persius who is reported to have owned a collection of more or less all of Chrysippus’s works.<sup>15</sup> Around the same time, Musonius Rufus lectured on Stoicism in Rome and his lectures were attended by a slave called Epictetus, who would go on to found his own school in Nicopolis on the western coast of Greece after gaining his freedom. Students at Epictetus’s school studied works by Chrysippus, while continually being reminded to apply Stoicism to their daily lives (see e.g. *Diss.* 1.4.14; 1.17.13–18). Reports of Epictetus’s lectures were recorded by one of his students, the historian Arrian, and these proved to be a decisive influence on the young Marcus Aurelius, who wrote his own notes “to himself” towards the end of his life. Other Stoics from this period for whom we have texts include Cleomedes (on astronomy) and Hierocles (on ethics).<sup>16</sup> Throughout this period the texts of Chrysippus were still readily available, as we can see from the frequent quotations in authors such as Plutarch and Galen; by late antiquity these were seemingly all lost.<sup>17</sup> Since then the reception of Stoic ideas has been closely bound up with the transmission of texts either by later Stoics or by other, often hostile authors reporting Stoic views.<sup>18</sup>

What did these texts say? What were the ideas that came to define Stoicism for later generations, including us? The doctrines that probably had the biggest impact on later generations were the claims that virtue (*aretê*) is the highest good and is sufficient for happiness (*eudaimonia*), that the soul is undivided and rational, meaning that emotions (*pathê*) are

the product of judgments under one's control, and that the cosmos is a single living being, identified with God, of which we are all parts.<sup>19</sup> However, precisely what "Stoicism" meant to later readers is especially complex, for it changed throughout its long and varied reception. As we have just seen, in the first two centuries CE Athenian Stoic texts seem to have circulated widely and a range of authors from this period quote from works by Chrysippus, in the process becoming our main sources of knowledge for his ideas.<sup>20</sup> However, the number of direct quotations from his works by authors in late antiquity is much lower. The late Neoplatonist Simplicius records a variety of pieces of information about Stoicism in his commentaries on Aristotle but he himself admits that in many cases he is drawing on the reports of now lost works by Porphyry (see in *Categorias* 2,5–9; 334,1–3). Simplicius also wrote a commentary on the *Handbook* of Epictetus, co-opting it into the Neoplatonic philosophical curriculum as a guide to preparatory moral training (Hadot 1996). His teacher Damascius mentions members of the "school of Epictetus" in his *Historia philosophia* (Athanasias 1999: 136–7), while Olympiodorus engages with Epictetus in his commentary on Plato's *Gorgias* (Jackson et al. 1998: 146–9).

This late ancient interest in Epictetus in the Greek-speaking Eastern Mediterranean appears to have influenced the Byzantine and Arabic traditions. The Byzantine scholar, book collector, and sometime archbishop Arethas of Caesarea owned copies of both the *Discourses* of Epictetus and the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius during a period that was crucial in the history of the transmission of ancient Greek texts.<sup>21</sup> It was possibly around this time, or perhaps earlier, that some of the Christian adaptations of Epictetus's *Handbook* were made (texts in Boter 1999). The *Handbook* was revised for Christian use by the replacement of pagan references with Christian ones. In one of the three Christian adaptations that survive references to Socrates are replaced by ones to St Paul (Boter 1999: 387). This same version, the *Paraphrasis Christiana*, also attracted an anonymous Greek commentary, which has been dated to the ninth or tenth century (Spanneut 2007: 82–4). In the next century another Stoic author, Cleomedes, also attracted attention and was referred to in a number of works by the philosopher Michael Psellus, including his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* (Todd 1992: 2).

In the Arabic tradition Epictetus may have also exerted his influence. It has been suggested that the first Arabic philosopher of note, al-Kindi, quoted from Epictetus's *Handbook* a number of times in his *On the Art of Averting Sorrows* (Boter 1999: 117). As al-Kindi did not read Greek himself, this suggests that either Epictetus's *Handbook* was translated into Arabic, or that extracts from it were included in a collection of wisdom literature translated into Arabic (see Adamson and Pormann 2012: 245–8). Al-Kindi's text went on to influence later Arabic philosophers, including al-Razi and Miskawayh (see Fakhry 1994: 68).

Beyond that, it is difficult to know how much Arabic philosophers might have known about Stoicism. Many texts that we know were translated into Arabic contained Stoic material. These include works by Alexander of Aphrodisias, Porphyry, Galen, and Simplicius (Badawi 1987). It is not unreasonable to assume, then, that some knowledge of Stoicism made its way to Arabic students of Greek philosophy, who would have known it as *Rivāqiyah* (from *riwaq*, meaning "arcade" or "portico"). However, whether these fragmentary bits of information made any great philosophical impact is much harder to assess. While some scholars have claimed a clear Stoic influence on Arabic philosophy (e.g. Jadaane 1968), others have remained far more cautious about claiming any great Stoic impact on Arabic philosophy (e.g. Gutas 1993). The general consensus among scholars of Arabic philosophy seems to be that in the current state of scholarship it is simply too early to make any substantive claims about a Stoic influence. As Dimitri Gutas has commented, "the Arabic counterparts to both von Arnim's *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* and Marcia Colish's *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* remain to be written" (Gutas 1993: 4961; cf. Riet 1974).

In the Latin West the picture is a bit clearer. The principal sources of knowledge in the early Middle Ages were the works of Cicero and Seneca, supplemented with others such as Boethius, Calcidius and, of course, Augustine. Cicero in particular was a vital source. The young Augustine read his philosophical works and his teacher, Ambrose, modeled his *On Duties* on Cicero's work of the same name, which in turn was drawing on the Stoic Panaetius (Colish 1990: II 58ff.). Manuscript evidence shows that Cicero's works were transmitted together and were circulating in France in the ninth century (Reynolds 1983: 124–5). They were known in the circle surrounding Charlemagne, and Charlemagne's biographer, Einhard, quotes from the *Tusculan Disputations* (ibid.: 132–3).

Seneca, by contrast, appears to have been somewhat neglected until the twelfth century, at which point his *Letters* started to circulate more widely, with his *Dialogues* gaining renewed attention in the thirteenth century (ibid.: 359; see also Reynolds 1965, 1968). The *Natural Questions* also started to receive attention around this time (Hine 1995: 207–8). Seneca's reception among Christian readers was shaped in no small part by the existence of a series of letters purporting to be between Seneca and St Paul, along with the judgements of various church fathers (see Ross 1974). Jerome's brief biography of Seneca in his *On Illustrious Men* was especially influential (Ker 2009: 182–5). It was also helped by the fact that Martin of Braga's *Rules for an Honest Life*, perhaps based on a lost work by Seneca, was mistakenly attributed to him (Colish 1990: II 297–302). Indeed, church fathers such as Tertullian, Lactantius, Jerome, and Augustine would prove to be important sources for both explicit judgements about Stoicism as well as implicit reworkings of Stoic ideas (Spanneut 1957; Colish 1990). Augustine's attitude towards Stoicism was especially complex, developed during his life, and varied depending upon the issue at hand. Unsurprisingly his views carried significant authority for later readers (see Sellars 2013).

The Renaissance saw the rediscovery of a wide range of texts that are now central to our knowledge of Stoicism, not least the *Lives and Opinions of the Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius (see further Palmer, Chapter 8 in this volume). Some of the foremost personalities of the Italian Renaissance played their part in preserving and disseminating Stoic texts. Cardinal Bessarion made a copy of Cleomedes (Todd 1992: 3), while Niccolò Perotti and Angelo Poliziano both translated Epictetus into Latin (Oliver 1954; Kraye, Chapter 9 in this volume). This period also saw the loss of some “Stoic” texts, such as when Lorenzo Valla questioned the authenticity of the correspondence between Seneca and St Paul that had done so much to make Seneca an acceptable author for Christian readers (Pfeiffer 1976: 40; Palmer, Chapter 8 in this volume).

The birth of printing transformed the availability of a wide range of texts. Among the earliest texts to be printed were Cicero's *Paradoxes of the Stoics* and *On Duties*, in 1465, by the famous Mainz printers Johann Fust and Peter Schoeffer (Stillwell 1972: 27). These were followed not long after by the *Tusculan Disputations*, printed in Rome in 1469 (ibid.: 50). Further works by Cicero followed in the 1470s, along with the *Lives* of Diogenes Laertius in the Latin translation of Ambrosius Traversarius and the philosophical works of Seneca.<sup>22</sup> By the end of the fifteenth century over seventy editions of works by Seneca had been printed (Goff 1964: 555–8). By contrast the works of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius had to wait until the sixteenth century to make their first appearances in print: the *Handbook* was first printed in 1529 (but also appeared the year before embedded within the first edition of Simplicius's commentary); the *Discourses* were printed in 1533; Marcus Aurelius in 1558. Cleomedes was printed for the first time in 1539.<sup>23</sup>

The sixteenth century saw not only the remainder of the most important sources for Stoicism appear in print but also the beginnings of a modern commentary tradition on Stoic



texts. Unsurprisingly the first Stoic to receive close attention was Seneca. Erasmus prepared an annotated edition of Seneca's prose works in 1515 and, ultimately dissatisfied with the result, another edition in 1529 (Papy 2002). A young Calvin wrote a commentary on Seneca's *On Clemency*, published in 1532 (Battles and Hugo 1969). Other annotated editions of the period worth noting include Muret's of 1585 (Kraye 2005).

For the most part the reception of Stoicism in the Middle Ages and up to the end of the Renaissance was dominated by ethical ideas found in the works of Seneca and Cicero. It was perhaps only in the seventeenth century that the full range of Stoic doctrines in logic, physics, and ethics came to light in the wake of a number of major publications connected to Stoicism that heralded the birth of modern Stoic scholarship.<sup>24</sup> Foremost among these were the pair of handbooks devoted to Stoic philosophy by Justus Lipsius (Lipsius 1604a, 1604b). These volumes tried for the first time to gather together systematically the *fragmenta* and *testimonia* for the Stoics from ancient authors. They were conceived as supplements to his monumental edition of Seneca published the following year (Morford 2006; Papy 2002), which was reprinted in a variety of formats throughout the century.

While Lipsius attended to Seneca, in France Guillaume du Vair focused attention on Epictetus, translating the *Handbook* into French for the first time (1585) and writing treatises on Stoic moral philosophy, including his *La philosophie morale des stoïques*, largely based on Epictetus (Michaut 1945). Around the same time the German humanist Caspar Scioppius (Kaspar Schoppe) published his *Elementa philosophiae Stoicae moralis* (Scioppius 1606). Scioppius was a close friend of Lipsius and shared his desire to present a new Christianized version of Stoicism. Whereas Lipsius's two works were primarily scholarly in intent, Scioppius's book was part of an attempt to promote the teaching of Stoicism in Catholic schools (Kraye 2008). Later authors such as Leibniz cited Lipsius and Scioppius together as modern champions of Stoicism (*Theodicy* §353, in Leibniz 1951: 337).

To these we can also add Daniel Heinsius's oration *De Stoica philosophia* (in Heinsius 1612), an exhortation to embrace Stoicism,<sup>25</sup> and Isaac Casaubon's celebrated edition of the satires of Seneca's nephew, Persius (Casaubon 1605). The brief text of Persius (23 pages) is followed by a massive commentary (558 pages) full of information about Stoicism. The scale of the commentary famously led Joseph Scaliger to comment that the sauce was better than the meat (Sandys 1903–8: II 209). Although not as systematic as Lipsius's two works printed a year earlier, Casaubon's efforts also make an important contribution to early scholarship on Stoicism.<sup>26</sup>

In the next generation, Isaac's son, Meric Casaubon, would go on to translate Marcus Aurelius into English (1634), coining the title *Meditations* in the process, and then editing the text as well (1643). He also edited for the first time one of the Christian paraphrases of the *Handbook* of Epictetus (1659). At the same time Thomas Gataker was working on his own edition of Marcus Aurelius, with a substantial commentary filling over 400 pages (1652). It has been said that there is little in von Arnim's modern collection of fragments for the early Stoics that is not already cited somewhere in Gataker's commentary (Kraye 2000: 117).

On the continent there was a flurry of scholarly work on Stoicism towards the end of the century that continued into the next, with theses and other essays published in Jena, Halle, Leipzig, Uppsala, and elsewhere (see the bibliographical guide in Heumann 1716). Among these the works of Jakob Thomasius (1676, 1682) stand out.<sup>27</sup> Around the same time André and Anne Dacier translated and annotated Marcus Aurelius (1690–91), and André also worked on Epictetus (1715). Stoicism also benefited from the development of the history of philosophy as a discipline, culminating in the publication of Johann Jakob Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae*, first published in 1742–44. These scholarly accounts of Stoicism were all

written in Latin but the eighteenth century also saw the continuing advancement of vernacular languages as media for philosophical work. Those Stoic texts that had not yet been translated into the principal European vernaculars were translated for the first time.<sup>28</sup> For readers of English, Elizabeth Carter translated the *Discourses* of Epictetus, published in 1758.<sup>29</sup>

The early nineteenth century saw the publication of a number of significant scholarly editions of Stoic texts. The year 1800 saw the completion of Johann Schweighäuser's major edition of Epictetus, the five volume *Epictetae philosophiae monumenta*. A few years later Jan Bake published the first collection of fragments for Posidonius in 1810 (Bake 1810), followed by an edition of Cleomedes in 1820. The evidence for Musonius Rufus was also gathered together for the first time (Peerlkamp 1822). These textual efforts were supplemented by further specialist studies.<sup>30</sup> In general, however, the early nineteenth century was a period of relative decline for the study of Stoicism, with German classical scholars and historians of philosophy more interested in Plato and Aristotle than the Hellenistic schools (see Ierodiakonou 1999). There were exceptions, of course, and in particular one might note the work of the French philosopher Félix Ravaisson (1856).

Towards the end of the century there was a fresh flurry of interest, with new scholarly works by Brochard (1879), Weygoldt (1883), Ogereau (1885), Stein (1886–88), Schmekel (1892), Dyroff (1897), and, on Epictetus, Bonhöffer (1890, 1894), among others. Around the same time Pearson produced an edition of the fragments of Zeno and Cleanthes (Pearson 1891), only to be trumped in the next decade when Hans von Arnim published his three volume collection of the fragments of the early Stoics in 1903 and 1905 (Arnim 1903–5; the fourth volume of indices was issued later, in 1924). Despite its limitations and a number of attempts to replace it, von Arnim's collection remains an essential point of reference for the study of the early Stoa (for Stoic logic there is now Hülser 1987). By this date, students of Stoicism had access not only to von Arnim's major collection but also to a fairly full set of critical editions of the later Stoic authors, all issued by the German publishing firm Teubner.<sup>31</sup>

The publication of von Arnim's *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* seems in many ways an appropriate place to end this brief survey. However von Arnim's collection itself highlights the fact that the body of extant ancient Stoic literature was far from static even then, for it included a number of Stoic texts and *testimonia* that had only recently been discovered in papyri. These included fragments of treatises by Chrysippus that had been recovered from the scrolls found at Herculaneum, notably parts of his work *Logical Questions*.<sup>32</sup> Von Arnim had edited one of these finds himself a few years before the publication of his collection (Arnim 1890). An equally important find used by von Arnim was Philodemus's history of the Stoa, the *Index Stoicorum Herculensis*.<sup>33</sup>

Beyond his work on the evidence for the early Stoa, von Arnim also edited another significant Stoic find on papyrus: the *Elements of Ethics* of Hierocles (Arnim 1906), a theoretical ethical treatise the rediscovery of which has done much to change the way in which we think about Stoicism in the Roman period.<sup>34</sup> A less significant but still noteworthy discovery was a papyrus fragment from the diatribes of Musonius Rufus, edited and published by Enoch Powell in 1936 (Enoch Powell 1936).

Since then further new Stoic texts have been recovered from the Herculaneum scrolls (see Marrone 1987, 1988; Dorandi 2005). These include further fragments from Chrysippus (Marrone 1997) and a second work by Philodemus devoted to Stoicism (Dorandi 1982). Whether there will be more finds it is hard to say. Marcello Gigante, director of the Centro Internazionale per lo Studio dei Papiri Ercolanensi in Naples for many years, commented that he thought it highly likely that there would be further Stoic discoveries (Gigante 1995: 3), but we shall have to wait and see.

The availability of Stoic texts and sources for otherwise lost Stoic texts has inevitably had its impact on the story of the reception of Stoic ideas, although naturally it is far from being the only factor at play. It is one of a number of factors that have contributed to the ways in which “Stoicism” has meant different things at different times to different readers. We saw earlier that Stoicism was very much a living tradition in the Hellenistic period and the meaning of “Stoicism” has been equally fluid ever since. Now the situation is perhaps a bit more settled, for the last half-century or so has seen a flourish of academic scholarship on Stoicism, putting our knowledge of Stoic philosophy on a much firmer footing.<sup>35</sup>

I shall not attempt to summarize the contents of each chapter that follows, as some introductions to edited volumes try to do; each contribution is very capable of speaking for itself. The contributors have backgrounds in a variety of disciplines and approach their topics in a number of different ways. This variation in approach reflects the wide range of subjects, authors, and periods that the volume as a whole addresses, and it would have been too restrictive to try to impose uniformity of approach. I hope that this variety will be welcome for those brave souls who hope to tackle the entire volume from start to finish, and not just dip in and out for particular chapters of interest. Taken together, the chapters that follow do not say everything there is to be said about the impact of Stoicism on Western thought, but hopefully they offer the reader a fairly full introduction to what we are here calling the Stoic tradition.

## Notes

- 1 Understandably there have been few attempts to map such a large terrain in a single volume and none so far as I am aware in English (except Wenley 1924, a relatively brief essay aimed at a general audience). Spanneut 1973 offers a survey in French, while Neymeyr et al. 2008 offers more substantial coverage in German by multiple hands, filling forty-three chapters in two volumes. Strange and Zupko 2004 offers a smaller collection of studies, based on a conference. There have been more attempts to cover just parts of the story: for example, for late antiquity see Colish 1990; for the Middle Ages see Verbeke 1983 and Ingham 2007; for the Renaissance onwards see Zanta 1914 (now dated), Abel 1978, and Moreau 1999 (a collection of papers). The reception of Stoicism has also been examined alongside that of the other Hellenistic schools in Osler 1991 and Miller and Inwood 2003.
- 2 Readers looking for an overview might consult Sellars 2006 and, in more detail, Inwood 2003.
- 3 For the doctrines mentioned in this paragraph see the texts in LS 27B, 45A–H, 46A, 55J–N, 46H–K, 47P, with Sellars 2006: 81–106.
- 4 For the doctrines mentioned in this paragraph see the texts in LS 57A, 58A–B, 63A–C, 65G–K, with Sellars 2006: 107–34.
- 5 On the meaning of “school” in this context see Dorandi 1999.
- 6 The figure of 705 is provided by Diogenes Laertius at 7.180, who also records a substantial list of titles at 7.189–202. That list is examined and annotated in Goulet 1989–: II 336–61.
- 7 It is worth noting that Zeno’s earliest followers called themselves “Zenonians,” only adopting the name “Stoics” later on (see Diog. Laert. 7.5). The change perhaps reflected a desire not to be bound by the doctrines of the founder.
- 8 Well-known examples include Aristo of Chios on the distinction between different types of “indifferents” (Diog. Laert. 7.160) and Boethus of Sidon on the cosmos being a living being (Diog. Laert. 7.143).
- 9 The early Stoics included in von Arnim’s *SVF* (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*) are Zeno, Aristo, Apollonides, Herillus, Dionysius of Heraclea, Persaeus, Cleanthes, Sphaerus, Chrysippus, Zeno of Tarsus, Diogenes of Babylon, Antipater of Tarsus, Apollodorus, Archedemus, Boethus of Sidon, Basilides, Eudromus, and Crinis. To these we might add Panaetius, Hecato, Posidonius, and (the last heads of the Athenian Stoa) Mnesarchus and Dardanus. For detailed information on all these figures see the entries in Goulet 1989–.
- 10 For a list of Stoics (and other philosophers) associated with Rhodes see Mygind 1999: 253–9. On the Stoics at Pergamum, including Crates of Mallos and Athenodorus of Tarsus, see Sandys 1903–8: I 144–64 and Pfeiffer 1968: 234–51.

- 11 The person who comes closest to describing himself as a Stoic is probably Justus Lipsius. The person whom many would point to as coming closest to Stoicism, Benedictus Spinoza, explicitly distanced himself from the title. See chapters by Lagrée (Chapter 11) and Miller (Chapter 15) in this volume.
- 12 The last recorded heads of the school were Mnesarchus and Dardanus (see Cicero, *Acad.* 2.69). The activity of all the Athenian schools was probably curtailed by the siege of Athens in 86 BCE (see Plutarch, *Sulla* 12.1–13.4 and Appian, *Mith.* 30–45).
- 13 Cicero refers to Posidonius throughout his works as his teacher and friend: *Fat.* 5–7; *Nat. D.* 1.6, 1.123, 2.88; *Fin.* 1.6; *Tusc.* 2.61 (see Edelstein and Kidd 1972: T30–34); note also Plutarch, *Cicero* 4.5 (Edelstein and Kidd 1972: T29).
- 14 On Seneca’s philosophical contemporaries see Sellars 2014. Another Stoic of this period worth noting is Chaeremon who, like Seneca, is said to have been one of Nero’s tutors (although Seneca does not mention him). See further Horst 1984.
- 15 The ancient biography of Persius (attributed to Suetonius but now credited to Valerius Probus) reports that in his will Persius left around 700 volumes of Chrysippus to Cornutus. On the circulation of Stoic texts in Rome see further Snyder 2000: 14–44 and Grafton and Williams 2006: 41–6.
- 16 Cleomedes and Hierocles are translated and discussed in Bowen and Todd 2004 and Ramelli 2009 respectively.
- 17 The authors who quote from Chrysippus’s works the most are Plutarch (97 times) and Galen (57, of which 50 derive from two works, *Peri pathôn* (21) and *Peri psukhês* (29)), followed by Diogenes Laertius (43) and Athenaeus (20, of which 14 derive from one work, *Peri tou kalou kai tês hêdonês*). The only late ancient authors to quote him are Stobaeus (5) and Simplicius (4). These figures are based on the indexes in SVF.
- 18 Of these texts the works of Seneca proved especially influential and their reception is discussed in Ross 1974, Dionigi 1999 (by multiple hands), and Trovato 2005. See also Ker 2009: 179–244 and the chapters on Seneca’s reception in Bartsch and Schiesaro 2015. For the reception of Epictetus see Boter 2011.
- 19 For more on the doctrines mentioned here see Sellars 2006: 110–14, 104–6, 114–20, and 91–5.
- 20 The most important sources of direct quotations from Chrysippus are Plutarch and Galen; see note 17 above.
- 21 Wilson (1996: 42) suggests that Arethas probably played a key role in the transmission of the *Discourses*, while Hadot (1998: 24) suggests that we owe the preservation of the *Meditations* to Arethas.
- 22 Cicero’s *De finibus* was first printed in 1470 and a collection of his philosophical works was printed in 1471 by Sweynheym and Pannartz in Rome (Goff 1964: 177). Traversarius’s Diogenes Laertius was first printed in 1472 (Goff 1964: 213). Seneca’s *Opera philosophica* were printed in 1475 (Goff 1964: 555).
- 23 The editions of the Greek text of Epictetus’s *Handbook* in 1529 and (with Simplicius) 1528 were preceded by the publication of Poliziano’s Latin translation in 1497. For the printing history of Epictetus see Oldfather 1927, 1952; for Marcus see Wickham Legg 1910. For an illustrated guide to early editions of Seneca see Niuitta and Santucci 1999.
- 24 One earlier work on Stoicism also worth noting is Barlaam of Seminara’s *Ethica secundum Stoicos*, probably written in the 1340s (Migne, *PG* 151, cols 1341–64). Divided into two parts, the first deals with the nature of happiness while the second focuses on the emotions. The text makes no reference to its sources and does not name any individual Stoics, although it may have drawn on Stoic material now lost (see Hogg 1997: 7). Barlaam, a monk from southern Italy, is best remembered as a friend of Petrarch, from whom Petrarch had hoped to learn Greek, but he was also an important intellectual in his own right.
- 25 Heinsius’s oration is discussed in Santinello 1993: 131, where Heinsius is discussed alongside Lipsius (124–9) as part of a wider examination of the study of ancient philosophy in the early modern period.
- 26 Alongside Lipsius, Scioppius, Heinsius, and Casaubon we might also note Adam Bursius (Burski), a Polish philosopher who defended Stoicism in his *Dialectica Ciceronis* of 1604 (see Heumann 1716: 746).
- 27 On Thomasius, including his work on Stoicism, see Santinello 1993: 409–42.
- 28 For Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius see the bibliographies in Oldfather 1927, 1952 and Wickham Legg 1910 respectively.
- 29 By this date readers of English had Lodge’s Seneca (1614), Casaubon’s Marcus Aurelius (1634), Diogenes Laertius (1688), Plutarch’s *Moralia* (1603, 1683–4). Epictetus’s *Handbook* had already been translated multiple times (1567, 1610, 1670, 1692). Cicero’s *Tusculan Disputations* were first translated in 1561; *On the Nature of the Gods* in 1741; but *On Moral Ends* not until 1812. See further Moss 1837.

- 30 See e.g. (mainly university dissertations) Wegscheider 1797, Gruber 1837, Schmidt 1839, Ritter 1849, Sells 1850, Heine 1859, Heinze 1860. This is merely a selection.
- 31 Teubner issued in some cases multiple critical editions of Stoic texts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: Seneca (Haase 1852–53, repr. 1893–95; Hermes 1905 with Gercke 1907 and Hense 1898), Cornutus (Lang 1881), Musonius Rufus (Hense 1905), Epictetus (Schenkl 1894 and 1916), Marcus Aurelius (Stitch 1882, Schenkl 1913), and Cleomedes (Ziegler 1891).
- 32 The papyri finds printed in von Arnim (1903) include Chrysippus's *Logikón Zêtêmatôn* (*PHerc* 307, *SVF* 2.298a; cf. Crönert 1901), the Papyrus Letronnii (*SVF* 2.180), a Herculaneum text previously edited by von Arnim (*PHerc* 1020, *SVF* 2.131; cf. Arnim 1890), and a handful of other fragments taken from papyri published in the *Herculaneia Volumina* (*SVF* 2.639; 2.640; 2.1060).
- 33 This text is *PHerc* 1018, first edited by D. Comparetti in 1875, and recently re-edited under the title *Stoicorum historia* in Dorandi 1994.
- 34 The text was re-edited in Bastianini and Long 1992 and can now be found with a facing English translation and commentary in Ramelli 2009.
- 35 I shall not attempt to document it all here. For a bibliography of work on Stoicism up to 1984 see Epp 1985. For an introductory guide to further reading see Sellars 2006: 167–86.

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## PART I

# Antiquity and the Middle Ages

# 1

## STOICISM IN ROME

*Gretchen Reydam-Schils*

The extent to which one should treat Stoicism in Rome as the first wave of its reception history depends largely on how one sees the relation between the two main phases in the history of the school, that is, between the founding generations and the Roman tradition. In one common narrative, in its transition from Greece to Rome, Stoicism lost much of its original critical edge and, in adapting itself to Roman sociocultural realities, became greatly diluted. This narrative is in itself a variation of a larger theme going back at least to the nineteenth century that views Latin culture as a weaker derivative of its Greek counterpart. Such a stance has also contributed to the creation of a category typically referred to as middle Stoicism, which consists mostly of Panaetius and Posidonius, prominent Stoics who came in contact with leading Romans of their day. In 155 BCE, the Stoic Diogenes of Babylon was one of three philosophers sent by Athens on a diplomatic mission to Rome (the other two were the Academic Carneades and the Peripatetic Critolaus). Panaetius (c.185–110 BCE) spent part of his life in Rome and belonged to the entourage of Scipio Africanus the Younger, while Posidonius (135–50 BCE) was part of a later delegation to Rome. Thus, these Stoics came to be seen as having paved the way in this process of cultural co-optation, allegedly helping to produce a variation of Stoicism that would be more palatable to Roman audiences, such as that which would emerge in Cicero's use of Panaetius as his main source in his *On Duties*. But the narrative of a Stoicism that gradually lost its innovative character can no longer be maintained, on many levels, and for many reasons.

The one Roman who wrote on Stoicism who can also reasonably be said to have endorsed a predominantly Roman sociocultural framework is Cicero. But Cicero was not a Stoic and claimed an Academic-skeptical allegiance for himself (although of which kind is a matter of ongoing debate), even if he turned out to be a very useful source for many central Stoic notions. Indeed, Cicero had an ambivalent attitude toward Stoicism. On the one hand, he was more favorably disposed toward certain aspects of their ethics (such as their handling of the passions in the *Tusculan Disputations* or Panaetius's theory of duties/*officia*) and their theology (their notion of Providence, as in his *On the Nature of the Gods*). On the other, he was very critical of their style of discourse (which he considered crabby, dry, and full of abstruse technical terminology); their ethical notion of preferred indifferents (things such as health and sustenance that are according to nature and do not fall under the good, strictly speaking); their epistemological notion of cognitive (*kataléptic*) impressions (impressions

ultimately, if not always, directly derived from sense perception that are supposed to yield truth); and their notions of fate and human responsibility.

Moreover, even if one can say that Cicero was writing from a distinctly Roman perspective and with his own political agenda, it is a fallacy to assume a priori that these two features would preclude him from being an original thinker and making significant contributions. On the contrary, one can make the case (as, for instance, in the essays collected in Nicgorski 2012) that Cicero had one of the most developed and distinctive views of practical philosophy and the so-called active life available to us from Antiquity.

Just as we cannot treat Cicero as a transparent window onto Stoicism, we also need to be cautious in assuming that Panaetius and Posidonius radically changed the course of Stoicism. Although these Stoics appear to have shown a greater interest also in Plato and Aristotle than their predecessors, we now know, for instance, that the traditional claim that Posidonius made major concessions to Plato, especially in his psychology, has to be taken with a considerable grain of salt, not the least because reports that make him appear to make such concessions, such as Galen's, tend to be polemical attempts to pit the views of different Stoics against one another (Gill 2006; Tieleman 1998, 2007). In reality, the fragmentary state of the extant evidence for the early Stoics (Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus) makes it difficult to discern to what extent the later Stoics deviated from their line of thought. Moreover, one has to take into account how inner-school authority was construed (see below). One can, however, make the case that many of the distinctive features of later Stoicism are a matter of a different emphasis rather than a radical departure from the original Stoic views.

The Stoics of the Roman imperial era, for their part, do not constitute a homogeneous group. There is evidence of teaching activity on the part of Cornutus (c.60 CE) and Musonius Rufus (c.30–100 CE), but not much information about its structure. Cornutus, for instance, appears to have taught topics pertaining to grammar as well as philosophy. We know that Epictetus directed a school in Epirus, and other Stoics were engaged in a wide range of practices. Whereas Seneca devoted more time to philosophy as he grew older, addressed others who had similar interests and concerns, and also wrote tragedies, Marcus Aurelius's writings were addressed to himself, and it is not clear whether he intended his reflections for a wider audience. Manilius's work (first century CE) belongs within the tradition of didactic poetry, and Cleomedes's astronomical treatise on the heavens is a rare example of a Stoic technical treatise from this period (c.200 CE), as is a work called the *Elements of Ethics* by a certain Hierocles (fl. 100 CE). Moreover, a significant strand of Stoic thought shows up in the works of poets such as Persius and Lucan, and Dio Chrysostom, who is an early representative of the Second Sophistic, and was a pupil of Musonius Rufus.

As with the views attested for Panaetius, most writings by the later Stoics tend to focus on ethics in action – on how to lead the good life and face challenges – and put great emphasis on the social dimension of ethics. Rather than endorsing an unreflective conformism, however, these accounts are hermeneutically complex, represent a conscious choice and very specific mode of doing philosophy, and engage critically with prevailing norms, a point to which I will return below. This mode of philosophy by no means indicates that knowledge of the more technical and theoretical aspects of Stoicism was no longer available in this era or that the later Stoics no longer cared about it. The technical aspects of Stoicism were still present in doxographies, compilations of the views of different schools of thought and philosophers, such as the work by Diogenes Laertius (probably early third century CE), which offer insights into the circulation of Stoic works and ideas in all three areas of physics, logic, and ethics. In addition, such critics of the Stoics as Plutarch (c.46–120 CE), Galen (129–199/

217 CE), and Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. late second to early third century CE) reveal that the debate about core Stoic tenets, and Chrysippus's teachings in particular, was very much alive in this period.

So, as mentioned already, the apparent differences between earlier and later Stoic discourse appear to be mostly a matter of focus. Cleomedes's exposition on astronomy, Manilius's didactic poem, and Seneca's own *Natural Questions* attest to a continued interest in advanced Stoic physics. In Seneca's other writings (see also Wildberger 2006), he occasionally also likes to demonstrate his knowledge of the Stoic tradition and key technical distinctions in it and other currents of thought (as in *Ep.* 58, 65, 94, and 95; see below). But these expositions may have been little more than finger exercises, just as a skilled orator may occasionally reveal the tools of his trade.

The writings of the Stoic Hierocles (fl. 100 CE) demonstrate how misleading the common scholarly view can be that represents the Stoics of the Roman imperial era as engaging in merely popular moralizing. His treatise on ethics (*Elements of Ethics*) now constitutes our best evidence of the highly sophisticated Stoic notion of appropriation (*oikeiôsis*), which stipulates that by nature and from birth, animals and human beings are equipped with a self-awareness and self-love that guides them toward self-preservation (see below). This notion combines insights from both physics (how nature works) and ethics (how human beings should lead their lives), and clearly demonstrates that later Stoics such as Hierocles still had a good grasp of the technical aspects of Stoicism.

These Stoics also apparently still had access to extensive writings by their predecessors, notably Chrysippus. According to the *Life of Persius* (32.35–33.40 Clausen), Cornutus inherited about 700 scrolls of Chrysippus's works from Persius's library. And although sessions of reading Stoic texts are not recorded in the extant evidence of Epictetus's teachings, the expositions do mention that Epictetus's approach partly relied on the writings of his Stoic predecessors, especially those of the prolific and systematic Chrysippus. Epictetus thus practiced commentary as a pedagogical method by reading philosophical works together with his pupils (*sunanagnôsis*, as this was called).

Yet it is very striking that whenever Epictetus mentions this pedagogical method, he more often than not sounds a cautionary note, claiming that it does one no good to be able to interpret and understand Chrysippus's works (or those of other thinkers, for that matter) unless one can also put those insights into practice and show how one has changed for the better as a result of one's reading. According to Epictetus, merely interpreting philosophical expositions and showing off one's erudition is no different from the preoccupation of a scholar of literature with trivial details that are meant to dazzle (*Diss.* 2.19.5–15; *Ench.* 49). Presumably Epictetus would measure his own success as a teacher by the actual moral progress of his pupils, not by their ability to parrot his teachings. There is similarly a right and wrong way of engaging in logic and physics, these authors make clear; the wrong way entails studying them for their own sake and indulging in technical details and prowess (see, for instance, Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.7.32–3; see also *Ench.* 52; Marcus Aurelius 10.9).

In the final analysis, according to the later Stoics, it is not just logic or physics in the philosophical curriculum that are subservient to the correct way of life. So, too, is talking about rather than practicing ethics. As Musonius Rufus (fr. 5 Hense) and Epictetus claim, one can hold discussions and write extensively about the good life, but anyone with philosophical interests is ultimately judged by the same standard as a physician, a sailor, or a musician: it is what one accomplishes that matters.

To understand this point more fully, we need to see how theory and practice relate to each other in Stoicism, and especially in the later accounts. "Philosophy," Musonius Rufus

claims, “is nothing else than to search out by reason what is right and proper, and by deeds to put it into practice” (fr. 14 Hense; see also fr. 4, on philosophy as the art of becoming a good human being). What especially sets later Stoicism apart from other schools of thought is the view that all theory, including what we would call theory or philosophizing about ethics, must serve an ethics in action. Theory and practice are inextricably intertwined in this point of view, but with an emphasis on practice. To the Stoics, positing pure thought (or even a higher state) as the goal of life and as practice (cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1325b) would make little sense, not in the least because they do not recognize a transcendent intelligible and noetic dimension to reality. For them, with their unified view of virtue in which all virtues entail one another, wisdom as the excellence of reason always constitutes *moral* virtue and being engaged *in the world* and a *web of social relations*.

Small wonder, then, that the later Stoics put so much emphasis on training (*meletê-askêsis*, as in Musonius Rufus fr. 6 Hense) as the indispensable bridge between theoretical insights and practice. This notion, which has connections with the Socratic and Cynic traditions, encompasses much more than Aristotle’s habituation, which is meant to shape the lower, irrational aspects of the soul (as in *Eth. Nic.* 2). The Stoics, with the potential and debated exception of Posidonius (see above), do not accept irrational aspects of the soul as existing independently from reason. Hence, they argue, training and habituation involve a human being’s entire disposition, including the process of learning to use one’s reason correctly. Like that of its Platonic and Peripatetic counterparts, the Stoic notion of the good is a radical departure from ordinary conceptions of happiness, and thus it is not easy to implement against prevailing practices, weaknesses in one’s own disposition, and bad habits. Therefore, according to this view, pupils need all the help they can get to make these insights sufficiently their own or to acquire the right disposition (*ethos*, as in Musonius Rufus fr. 5 Hense) for putting them into practice under all circumstances.

For the later Stoics, ethics in action means showing one’s mettle in ordinary, everyday life circumstances and in one’s given socio-political obligations. For this reason, students are not meant to form settled attachments to a school, as increasingly happened, for instance, with the inner circles of the schools of Platonism. Instead, the knowledge and training acquired through education has to be portable and to become fully interiorized, or digested as it were (Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.21.1–3; *Ench.* 46; Seneca, *Ep.* 2.2–4, 84; *Ben.* 7.2.1). Thus Seneca and Epictetus show their own independence toward their Stoic predecessors and do not extol a Zeno, Cleanthes, or Chrysippus above all others. “We Stoics,” Seneca famously claimed, “are not subjects of a despot: each of us lays claim to his own freedom” (*Ep.* 33.4). If Chrysippus took the liberty to disagree with his teacher Cleanthes, “why, then, following the example of Chrysippus himself, should not every man claim his own freedom?” (*Ep.* 113.23).

Epictetus and Musonius Rufus also downplay their own importance as philosophers (on Epictetus, see Long 2002 and Bénatouïl 2009; see also Reydam-Schils 2011) – even though they do, on occasion, mention the benefits of studying under their guidance. Students are told sternly not to show off their philosophical knowledge (e.g. Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.26.9) and that external trappings, such as a certain dress code, do not make the philosopher.

In the long run, and over the course of an entire lifetime, according to this view, teachers are there only to point the way (as Seneca and Epictetus indicate that Chrysippus had done for them). Self-education and monitoring one’s own progress as one goes through different situations in life are to do the bulk of the work of imbuing philosophical teachings. Modes of such ongoing training include reading and excerpting philosophical works, refreshing one’s memory of key tenets so as to have these ready at hand (as the etymology of *manual* or Epictetus’s *Enchiridion* implies), engaging in conversations with

others, witnessing one's conversations with oneself, contemplating the order of the universe, and writing.

Although Seneca was not a teacher in the same sense as Musonius Rufus and Epictetus, he increasingly focused on philosophical writings toward the end of his life and mapped out his own moral progress and challenges, along with summaries and advice for his addressees and audience. Marcus Aurelius's reflections, many of which were jotted down during military campaigns, are the clearest example of writing as ongoing training, especially if originally intended primarily for himself and not for a broader audience. (Epictetus attributed this kind of writing even to Socrates allegedly training himself in the art of refutation, raising objections and coming up with and counter-arguments, *Diss.* 2.1.32–3; 2.6.26–7). In those reflections, we find the period's most powerful man, as measured by conventional standards, warning himself against completely identifying himself with his public role. "Make sure," he tells himself, "that you are not turned into a Caesar" (6.30) without leaving space for the self to continue groping for that which truly matters.

Because the later Stoics do not constitute a homogenous group, and because this chapter deals with self-proclaimed Stoics, we next turn to some of the more distinctive views of the main figures in this tradition: Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Hierocles.

## Seneca

Seneca (4 BCE/1 CE to 65 CE), unlike his teacher Sextius and most of the Stoics of the Roman imperial era, wrote in Latin, and in contrast to Cicero, he saw his role not primarily as one of a translator and transmitter of Greek thought, but rather as someone who "thought" in Latin and extended its linguistic range for writing philosophy (Inwood 2005). This approach in itself gives him a distinct voice.

The *Letters*, addressed to a certain Lucilius, provide perhaps the best window onto Seneca's philosophical writings. Even if Lucilius is also a historical figure, it is clear that he is meant to represent a type (and thus the letters, in all likelihood, are fictionalized at least to some extent): a person who is on the verge of turning away from a life governed by traditional ambition and concerns and whose progress the reader can follow throughout the letters (and presumably compare to their own). But Seneca himself is the second party on this trajectory: he presents himself not as a sage, but as someone who might be ahead of people like Lucilius in terms of his moral development (or of some of the addressees in his other writings), but who still is also merely making progress. And thus he tells Lucilius that in their correspondence, his friend is a witness to Seneca's conversation with himself (*Ep.* 27.1; see also 75.1).

*Letter* 104 captures a number of central themes in Seneca's philosophical writings. It renders in both philosophical content and literary form how Seneca sees one's relation to both the universe and other human beings. In a series of expanding concentric circles, Seneca begins with his rapport with his spouse and a journey he undertook to improve his health. In a second movement, he broadens this theme to a reflection on the futility of travelling as an attempt at escape and on the threat to one's inner tranquility that can be posed by a wrong kind of attachment to things and people, the latter's mortality posing a particular challenge. And he ends with the realization that only philosophical inquiry undertaken in the correct manner (see above) can truly enlarge our horizon to keep the world and others always present in our thought and lead us to true freedom.

Among these letters, the two most famous, and most influential in the later Stoic tradition because they also sum up major strands of reasoning that include Platonic and Peripatetic

views, are *Letter 58*, on the different modes of being, and *Letter 65*, on causes. *Letter 58* distinguishes six Platonic modes of being (but which also show Peripatetic and Stoic influences): (a) being in thought (*cogitabile*); (b) being *per excellentiam* (god); (c) being, in the strict sense (*quae proprie sunt*), the Platonic forms; (d) being as form and structure inherent in the things themselves as imitations of Platonic forms; (e) common being (*quae communiter sunt*), as in “human being”; and (f) quasi-being (*quae quasi sunt*), such as time and the void. In *Letter 65*, Seneca contrasts the Stoic explanatory parsimony that relies on only one cause – the active divine principle interacting with matter – with the over-abundance of causes (*turba causarum*, 65.11) posited by Aristotle (i.e. four: matter, the divine maker as origin-cause, the form in things, and the goal) and Plato (who added a fifth cause, the form as model; Seneca here also attributes a so-called metaphysics of prepositions to Plato, with god, for example, being rendered as *a quo*).

Also highly influential are *Letters 94* and *95*, which deal with a debate within the Stoic camp about the relation between doctrine, or general principles derived thereof, and precepts, or advice applicable in specific circumstances (for example, on how a son should behave towards his father; see below on Hierocles). Seneca argues that a combination of doctrine and precepts is most effective, a stance that also means that forms of discourse that are related to precepts, such as consolation (*consolatio*), encouragement (*exhortatio*), admonition (*monitio*), persuasion (*suasio*), and reproach (*exprobratio*), are crucial to the philosophical undertaking.

In a famous passage from his *On Anger* (3.36), Seneca mentions that every evening he submits himself to self-examination to assess how his day has gone and how he is doing in terms of moral progress. As in the writings of other Roman Stoics, a very distinctive notion of self is at work here, one that permeates all of Seneca’s writings (Guillemin 1952–4; Edwards 1997; Reydam-Schils 2005). Located in reason or the governing principle of the soul (the *hégemonikon*), this notion of self functions primarily as a mediator between the values recommended by philosophy and the exigencies of ordinary, everyday demands. As such, it is a unified self (unlike a Platonic or Peripatetic part or power-based view of the soul) that differs radically from any Cartesian or post-Cartesian notion in that it relies on a unity of soul and body and is embedded in an objective normative framework that also encompasses the rational order of the universe. The first-person voice in Seneca’s writings does have some of his traits (such as his ongoing struggle with his health or his disillusionment about his involvement in politics toward the end of his life), but they are not autobiographical in our usual understanding of that term: these personal details are phrased as general challenges any human being could face. His focus on the fear of mortality has also to be understood from this angle: it does not entail a morbid obsession, but rather the realization that death poses one of the main threats to humans’ inner peace.

Seneca’s writings in general aim at reinforcing this self, as defined in Stoic terms. He enjoins his reader repeatedly to “withdraw into yourself” (*Ep.* 5, 22.1 seq. and 9 seq.). True freedom, inner security, and magnanimity all reside in this self, which “does not submit itself to anything, but on the contrary subordinates all things to itself” (*Ep.* 124.12), and it has voluntarist features without representing a full-fledged will (Inwood 2005: 132–56). In his *On Anger* (see also *Ep.* 113.18), Seneca, given his strong emphasis on the freedom of the self, also lays out one of the most developed extant accounts of the so-called pre-emotions, that is, the soul and body’s primary responses to external occurrences (such as, for instance, the face turning pale when one is confronted with a dangerous situation) that do not qualify as passions; they are pre-rational because they do not involve a mistaken judgement of reason (Sorabji 2000: 55–65; Graver 2007).

As with the other Roman Stoics, the social dimension of ethics is essential to Seneca. Seneca, however, also dwells at great length on the theme of the general moral corruption of his contemporaries. The bad influence of others who adhere to wrong values is one of the two factors of corruption generally recognized by the Stoics (the other being attraction inherent in things themselves, such as wealth and food). One of the distinctive themes of Seneca's approach to social ethics is his rapport with his spouse Paulina, which he himself contrasts with that of Socrates and Xanthippe (*Ep.* 104) and which the historian Tacitus brings to the fore in his account of Seneca's suicide (*Ann.* 15.62 seq.). In Seneca's own assessment of the legitimacy of suicide, he emphasizes social responsibility: as long as one can still be of use to one's community and close circle, one should postpone suicide, even if other factors such as a failing health would indicate such a course of action (*Ep.* 78.2; 98.15 seq.; 104.2–5).

Much scholarly attention has been devoted to Seneca's ambivalence about political power and wealth (as in his *On Leisure* and *On the Happy Life*), but here two important points should be kept in mind. The first is that, according to standard Stoic doctrine, what most matters is not involvement or detachment, poverty, or wealth (even though wealth is a so-called preferred indifferent, meaning that if circumstances allow, one can opt for wealth), but rather the motivation and reasoning behind one's choices. (Withdrawal out of fear, for instance, is not to be condoned, any more than unbridled ambition for power.) Second, according to a line of thinking also common to many Roman Stoics, involvement and detachment always go together. Even when one is most in the thick of things, one should maintain some inner distance, precisely in the space of the self where the value mediation takes place; similarly, even when one finds oneself removed from traditional social interaction (during exile on a remote island, for instance), one should maintain one's connection to the community of gods and men, the so-called cosmopolis, and maintain one's moral responsibility to others.

The theme of the cosmopolis brings us to Seneca's view of the role of the study of nature in philosophy. In his *On Benefits* (7.1), for instance, Seneca does not leave any doubt that it is much preferable to have a few maxims of practical philosophy at hand that will make one better and happier than a vast storehouse of recondite knowledge about nature and its hidden causes. But it is in the preface to the third book of his *Natural Questions* that he solves the riddle of this quasi-skeptical approach to the study of nature. According to Seneca, physics and moral self-improvement are meant to reinforce each other, and only a physics that serves this mutual relation is worth pursuing. Understanding ourselves correctly implies understanding our place and role in the universe, how we relate to the divine principle, and, in the universal community, to other human beings (Williams 2012).

### Musonius Rufus

Judging by the extant reports of his teaching activity, Musonius Rufus (c.30–100 CE), Epictetus's teacher, appears to have been the Roman Stoic who most strongly emphasized the importance of an ethics in action. Thus, as mentioned already, he claims without further ado that "philosophy is *nothing else* than to search out by reason what is right and proper, and by deeds to put it into practice" (fr. 14 Hense). The biographical anecdotes told about him in Antiquity thereby acquire extra significance in that they portray Musonius as the ideal philosopher according to his own criteria. A cluster of anecdotes about his exile to the proverbially arid island of Gyara, for instance, tell us that he accepted his lot without hatred for Rome as his fatherland (Favorinus, *On Exile* 76.17–20 Barigazzo), that he continued to attract pupils



wherever he found himself, and that he benefited the island community by the discovery of a well (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 7.16). In other words, he never lost sight of the social dimension of ethics, which is so central to the Stoic tradition of this period.

Musonius Rufus perhaps stands out the most because of his views on women and marriage, which have points in common with positions that are also attested for Antipater of Tarsos (*SVF* 3.62–3) and Hierocles (Stob. 4,502–7 WH; see below). According to Musonius, women have all principal human features in common with men (fr. 3 Hense): reason, sense perception, body parts, and a disposition toward virtue. Given that all human beings strive toward being virtuous, he held, women too should study philosophy to enhance their rational decision-making, justice, moderation, and courage. (Musonius uses the template of the four so-called cardinal virtues throughout the extant expositions.)

At first blush, Musonius combines the injunction that women should study philosophy with concessions to traditional viewpoints. To forestall the criticism that studying philosophy would make women shirk their traditional responsibilities, he claims that, on the contrary, such a study would make them better at these tasks and turn them into tireless defenders of their children and helpmates of their husbands. Yet Musonius also introduces two points that greatly nuance this more traditional perspective. First, he encourages not just women, but men, too, to work with their own hands (fr. 3 Hense; *autourgia*). The best occupation for a philosopher, he holds, would be that of a shepherd or a farmer (fr. 11 Hense), as pupils would see their teacher modeling the good life and the leisure it affords would leave enough opportunity for learning and discussion. For all human beings, philosophy, as pointed out earlier, is to serve practice (fr. 3 Hense). Second (fr. 4 Hense), Musonius does not insist on an absolute division of labor between men and women. Although he notes that certain tasks appear to be more suited to men than to women because of differences in physical strength, Musonius is also willing to entertain the possibility that all human tasks constitute a common obligation and that sometimes roles can be switched.

The cluster of texts about marriage (fr. 13a–b, and 14) shows that Musonius posited an ideal marriage as a reciprocal relation between equals, based on virtue and genuine mutual affection. Even though he limits the role of sex to procreation (fr. 12 and 15), producing offspring is not what primarily makes a marriage for him, but rather the quality of the bond between the spouses (fr. 13a). And he firmly rejects double standards in sexual morality (fr. 12; see also Seneca, *Ep.* 94.26).

## Epictetus

As already mentioned, in the case of Epictetus (c.50–125 CE) we see more clearly than in the testimonies about Musonius Rufus's teaching that logic, physics, and the exposition of Chrysippus's works were part of his curriculum. Yet he certainly also emphasizes that these forms of inquiry should always serve the correct way of leading one's life and not be studied merely for their own sake. Hence he too underscores the importance of effort (*meletê*) and training (*askêsis*; see *Diss.* 2.9.13 seq.). Even more than other Stoics, Epictetus uses Socrates as a role model, borrowing from him (a) certain "Socratic" theses such as the claim that no one errs willingly; (b) examples from the manner in which he conducted himself, especially in the face of the charges leveled against him that led to his death; and (c) a method of inquiry (Long 2002). The other model on which Epictetus relies is that of the ideal Cynic, who displays none of the shocking behaviors described in our other sources for Cynicism (see esp. *Diss.* 3.22). Indeed, the extent to which Epictetus diverts attention from himself as a potential role model is quite striking.

Epictetus's Zeus, whose primary role, in line with early Stoicism, is to act as Providence, would have put our body and external goods entirely under our control if he could have. But because these are only parts of the universe as a whole and as such are subordinated to this overall order, they are not "up to us" or under our control (*Diss.* 1.1.7–13, 4.1.99–110). Our reason, on the other hand, because of its close affinity with divine reason, can overcome these limitations and is the only thing that is truly up to us (see also *Ench.* 1). Making full use of our reason, as human beings, entails making a rational use of our representations (*phantasiai*), and the latter in turn entails that we apply correctly the general notions (*prolēpseis*) with which nature has equipped us, such as the moral categories of good and evil.

How does one learn to use one's representations rationally and to apply one's general notions correctly? Epictetus recommends three types of exercises to reach this double goal: the first focuses on desire (*orexis*) and aversion (*ekklisis*), the second on impulse (*hormē*) and rejection (*aphormē*), and the third on assent (*sunkatathesis*) and suspension of judgement (*epochē*). Pierre Hadot (1998) has connected these three types of exercises with the three branches of philosophy – physics, ethics, and logic, respectively – and this hypothesis still provides a fruitful hermeneutical key to Epictetus's thought.

The first exercise asks us to structure our desires and aversions, so that in general we strive for what is truly good, namely virtue as the optimization of reason, and experience aversion only from what is truly evil, vice. The connection with physics becomes relevant when one realizes that the proper structure of human desire enjoins one to align one's own reason with the divine reason that permeates the entire *kosmos* and manifests itself as Providence. This exercise, therefore, allows one to look at ethics from the angle of its connection with physics. While developing this broader philosophical perspective, Epictetus recommends, pupils should suspend their desires and aversions for the time being.

The second exercise deals with concrete actions and focuses on the so-called appropriate actions (*kathēkonta*, sometimes also called duties) – that is, actions that one should engage in according to nature and one's position in life. In this context, as is the case with the other later Stoics, Epictetus devotes a lot of attention to social duties: how one should behave as a son, a father, a brother, etc. Even though one should avoid being too dependent on others and others can exert a bad influence on one's value judgements, human nature has an intrinsic social aspect that manifests itself in a certain reliability (*ti piston*), affection (*sterktikon*), readiness to help (*ôfelêtikon*), and tolerance (*anektikon*; *Diss.* 2.10.23). Although it is true that the good should win out over our social relations if a conflict between the two arises (see also Musonius Rufus fr. 16 Hense), it is also the case that a proper disposition toward others is part and parcel of virtue and the good (*Diss.* 3.3.5–10).

Finally, the exercise that covers assent and suspension of judgement deals with how we arrive at correct judgements, namely with logic. But the proper mode of engaging in logic is not for the sake of technical prowess, but in the context of a normative framework. In other words, one hones one's skill in distinguishing between the true and the false for the sake of the good and the bad, so that in the case of this type of exercise, the connection with ethics again remains paramount.

Epictetus uses the term *prohairesis*, which he sometimes also identifies with the self (*Diss.* 1.1.23 seq.; 1.17.26; 2.22.20), to denote rationally informed intentionality. This *prohairesis* does not represent some novel and distinct entity over and above reason as the ruling principle (*hēgemonikon*) in human beings, but rather, in light of Epictetus's category of that which is up to us, those aspects of psychology that emphasize a human being's independent ability to have his or her actions informed by the correct disposition and judgements in the chain of reason, desire, representation, assent, impulse, and action (*Diss.* 1.17.21 seq.; Asmis 2001;

Long 2002: 210–20). Hence, *prohairesis* in Epictetus also carries some connotations of what at a later stage in intellectual history would come to be known as the will.

### Marcus Aurelius

As Hadot has claimed (Hadot 1998: 85ff.), the three types of exercises that Epictetus recommended also apply to the work of Marcus Aurelius (121–80 CE), who tells us himself that one of his teachers had given him a copy of the lectures of Epictetus (1.7). If logic is not the dominant topic in his writings (but on this topic, see now Giavatto 2008), physics does appear to play a much more important role than in the extant evidence for Musonius Rufus, especially as the foundation for human sociability.

Using a line of argumentation that we find also in Seneca (*Ep.* 16.4–6) and Epictetus (fr. 1 Schenkl = fr. 175 Schweighäuser) – a similarity often overlooked in the secondary literature – Marcus Aurelius tends to apply an either–or reasoning to physics: either the world is a random agglomeration of atoms (in a clear echo of the Epicurean position) or it is governed by a Providence that has given it a rational order. Such statements should not be interpreted as a weak commitment on Marcus Aurelius’ part to Stoic physics, but rather as serving a double function. On the one hand, they underscore the right disposition: in either alternative, we should face what happens around us with equanimity. But on the other, they also clearly function as an *a fortiori* claim. If even an atomist who does not believe that the *kosmos* has a rational order can display such equanimity, how much more does such an attitude recommend itself to someone who believes that the world is good and rational through and through?

Sociability (*koinōnia*) in the guise of justice, defined as working for the common good, is a central theme in Marcus Aurelius’ writing (see also van Ackeren 2011 and Gill 2013). He anchors human sociability in the connection between human and divine reason, resulting in the formulaic claim that for gods and human beings, to be rational is to be social. This perspective governs the first book of the *Meditations*, in which Marcus Aurelius describes all the social relations that made him who he is.

In the field of politics, Marcus Aurelius displays a strong realism. Though he hints at times at his role as emperor (11.18), he emphasizes that one should not hope for Plato’s *Republic* (9.29) and clearly also distances himself from his imperial role (6.30). The concept of reservation (*hupexairesis*) permits Marcus Aurelius to have realistic expectations, especially in dealing with others: whenever we plan to undertake an action, he asserts, we should remind ourselves that the outcome could be different from what we had intended. Yet the same concept also allows him to pursue the philosophical ideal of the good, especially through the function of turning around (*peritropē*), in which even obstacles can be turned into opportunities for exercising virtue.

### Hierocles

Although we know next to nothing about this Stoic, Hierocles (second century CE) provides an invaluable glimpse of the kind of ethical theory that underlies much of the later Stoics’ approach to philosophy. An account preserved on papyrus called *Elements of Ethics* gives us some of our best information about how the notion of Stoic appropriation (*oikeiōsis*) is supposed to work, and a number of passages preserved in Stobaeus examine how to conduct oneself in a range of social relations toward the fatherland or the gods (Ramelli 2009).

Appropriation entails that all animals, including human beings, are born with an awareness of, as well as an affective disposition toward, themselves that makes them pursue self-preservation.

Hierocles wants to demonstrate (a) that appropriation exists, (b) that it is continuous, and (c) and that it starts from the moment of birth. The last part of the extant text is important because it lists several forms of appropriation; he terms one of these affectionate appropriation (*sterktikê oikeiôsis*), as expressed towards others, and the last lines deal with human beings' sociability.

These final parts of the text can be interpreted as a natural bridge to a listing of the appropriate functions (*kathêkonta*) of specific social relations, so that it is possible that both accounts may have belonged to one and the same work. The most famous passage from the second group of texts, the ones preserved in Stobaeus, contains the injunction that we should think of our relationships with others in terms of concentric circles (Stob. 4,671,7–673,11 WH). In the center is an individual's mind, surrounded in ever-widening circles by his or her body, close relatives, and further relations, all the way out to the community of all human beings. If we keep pulling the outer circles inward, the end result is that we will be equally well-disposed to all human beings, though different modalities of relationships would presumably continue to exist.

### Coda

Tacitus reports that Musonius Rufus, in his commitment to philosophy, mingled with an army of soldiers and admonished them about the benefits of peace and the risks of war, trying to talk them into peace, only to be met with boredom, ridicule, and even aggression (*Hist.* 3.81). If he had not given up his attempt at “untimely wisdom” (*intempestiva sapientia*) by heeding the advice of more temperate bystanders and yielding to threats by others, Tacitus claims, he would have been attacked and trampled under foot.

That this kind of anecdote became a stock theme is proven by a similar story about Musonius's student, Dio Chrysostom (40 CE to c.120 CE) in Philostratus (*Life of the Sophists* 1.23.1; 488 Olearius). Unlike Musonius Rufus, however, Dio was successful. Even after his alleged conversion to philosophy, his formidable rhetorical training apparently served him well. According to Philostratus, Dio presented himself as a sage, a *sophos*, and adopted the role of Odysseus. His persuasiveness was such that he cast a spell, like Circe in the *Odyssey* (10.213), even on men who did not understand Greek well.

All we hear about Musonius Rufus from Tacitus is that he was a Stoic and devoted to philosophy; Philostratus, however, carefully stages Dio's intervention and self-presentation. (This may also point to a difference in perspective between Tacitus and Philostratus as authors.) Musonius Rufus mingles with the troops, holds forth, and comes across as inept, to put it mildly. Dio, in a histrionic gesture, tears off his rags, climbs naked onto an altar to deliver his speech, captures his audience with a startling opening line in which he assumes the role of Odysseus (see also his *Or.* 13, 33), and comes across as a masterful manipulator of crowds, a sorcerer of some sort.

But it is also the case that in these accounts, Musonius wants his audience to reflect about the advantages of peace over those of war, whereas Dio merely convinces the soldiers that it would be better to go along with the Romans. Musonius, in other words, wants his listeners to reach a deeper level of understanding, whereas Dio wants to win the day. This contrast captures almost all of the main features that make up the later Stoics' conscious attempt to set themselves apart from common cultural expectations and social success as measured by traditional standards and embraced by figures such as Dio. (This contrast is perhaps all the more interesting because Musonius Rufus taught both Epictetus and Dio.) Such anecdotes can serve as a final reminder that later Stoics such as Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus, and

Marcus Aurelius each made, in his own distinctive manner, highly conscious and reflective choices about how to present themselves. They adopted a mode of engaging in philosophy that kept them tied to their communities without surrendering to conventional social norms and expectations.

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## 2

# STOICISM IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

## The Apostle Paul and the Evangelist John as Stoics

*Troels Engberg-Pedersen*

The question of the relationship between Stoicism and early Christianity is one of those that will not go away. The fact that a short, apocryphal and in itself not very interesting exchange of letters between Seneca and the apostle Paul has been preserved to us from antiquity suggests that there is some substance to the question. Even in antiquity some people apparently felt that there was an affinity here that was worth exploring. Luke, the evangelist, who also authored the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament, must have felt the same when he composed a speech by Paul on the Athenian Areopagus (Acts 17:22–34) which very clearly draws on specifically Stoic ideas and even quotes the Stoic poet Aratus on Zeus:

For “In him we live and move and have our being”; *as even some of your own poets have said*, “For we too are of his offspring.”<sup>1</sup>

At the same time it has to be said that any statement – whether ancient or modern – on the relationship between Stoicism and early Christianity is most of all a hermeneutical *Lehrstück* in how any position on the matter reflects the intellectual background and interests of the speaker.<sup>2</sup>

This also holds in the present. For a number of independent reasons there has been a strong renewal of interest in Stoicism within philosophy during the last three decades. This reflects an increased philosophical interest – probably under the influence of science – in bodiliness, materialism and monism and a concomitant critique of the traditional concern in philosophy with dualism and the mind as represented by that powerful current in Western thought which is Platonism. Concomitantly, there has been a turn away within scholarly analysis of the early Christian writings from the traditional, theologically oriented focus on ideas in the direction of an interest in practices, social situations, bodiliness and more. Here too, what has been left behind (by some, at least) is the huge baggage of the amalgamation of specifically Christian and basically Platonic ideas that began to be developed in the *second* century CE when a renewed form of Platonism was gradually becoming authoritative within philosophy. The increased interest in Stoicism during the last three decades among scholars of the New

Testament (which basically dates in the *first* century CE) is part of the more general turn away from Platonism. It is also part of a movement in the direction of looking at the New Testament from a critical, religious studies perspective that puts a distinctly theological interest on hold. In both respects the recent turn to Stoicism is itself also hermeneutically biased in the sense that it reflects changes in scholarly interests.<sup>3</sup>

In what follows I will give two examples of the heuristic (as opposed to genetic) value of understanding central early Christian texts in the light of Stoicism.<sup>4</sup> The aim is to show the complex ways in which Stoicism may be seen to underlie the thought of these texts: not so as to make them Stoic, but so as to help them express their *own* perspective on the world. The reader should be warned that the readings for which I shall argue are not always standard readings. I am attempting to show how Stoicism may be used creatively to make us understand the early Christian texts better. Note also that a certain amount of explanation is required to make the case in an intelligible way.

### **Paul on how to overcome *akrasia*: two questions for Romans 7:7–8:13**

In his letter to the Romans Paul argues that the Jewish law of Moses is in itself insufficient to bring about the goal of which Paul is speaking, namely “righteousness” in the present and “salvation” in the future. The latter goal was to be understood as something as esoteric as a resurrected life in heaven together with Christ. Here, however, our focus will be on Paul’s account of the proper route *towards* the goal: *not* the Mosaic law, *but* the “Christ event” (that is, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ) and the human *experience* of that event in faith (*pistis*) or the “belief” or conviction *that* it has occurred. Why does Christ work where the Mosaic law does not?

Paul spells out his answer to this question in a famous passage in the middle of the letter, 7:7–8:13, where he tackles the well-known philosophical question of *akrasia* and how it might be overcome. Because it addresses a theme that is in itself a philosophical one, the passage is an obvious place to go if one wants to understand Paul’s relationship with ancient philosophy. We shall see that his argument presupposes a number of motifs that have a distinctly Stoic origin. But the passage is also of central importance in itself since it addresses the following question, which goes into deciding Paul’s relationship with Judaism. If Christ is the necessary route to Paul’s goal, does Paul’s thinking lead him *away* from the law of Moses? Did he take the law to be *superseded*? This question would naturally come up for Paul himself, who was a Jew. For the same reason his answer is that his understanding of Christ does *not* have this consequence. On the contrary, as he has already stated earlier in the letter (3:31), “we uphold the law.” But what, then, is the precise relationship between the law and Christ that will make that possible?<sup>5</sup> Thus there are two questions to be answered in the following discussion. One is internal to Paul’s own thought (on the relationship between the law and Christ) and one is more external and of immediate relevance to the present book: on Paul’s relationship with ancient philosophy and Stoicism, in particular.

#### ***Romans 7:7–13: the law creates an awareness of sin***

Paul begins by suggesting a special role that the law has for a person who wishes to live in accordance with it and who has not (yet) experienced the Christ event. The way the law functions when it states that *You shall not covet* is to bring about in its listeners an awareness of their own “sin” (7:7), namely that from time to time they will in fact have and act on those desires that the law is designed to *prevent*. As Paul dramatically says, “the very commandment

that promised life,” namely if it were to be followed, “proved to be death to me” (7:10), namely by making it clear to him that he does *not* follow it. That is the awareness of sin that is generated by the law. “So the law is [in itself] holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (7:12), but *sin* brought death to the person, “*working* death in me *through* what is good [the law], *in order that* sin might be *shown* to be sin” (7:13). Here Paul is out to distinguish the law from sin even though living under the law *is* living with sin in the way he goes on to explain. The next verse (7:14) introduces the problem of *akrasia* as Paul’s way of spelling out exactly how the law and sin together create an awareness of sin. He says: “For we know that the law is spiritual [*pneumatikos*]; but I am of the flesh [*sarkinos*], sold into slavery under sin.” And he then spells out (7:15–25) how this “slavery under sin” works when a person is also living under the law.

***Romans 7:15–25: akrasia as an ineradicable form of sin under the law***

*Akrasia* is knowing the good (7:19, through one’s knowledge of “God’s law,” which one also wishes to follow, 7:22), but not knowing what one does *when* one does what one does *not* want to do, but in fact hates doing (7:15). Paul gradually sharpens his description. First, “I *know* [*oida*] that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh [*sarx*]” (7:18). Then “I *find* [*heuriskō*] with regard to the law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand” (7:22, my translation). And finally, “I *see* [*blepō*] in my members *another* law at war with the law of my mind” (7:23). This gradual, ever stronger realization of the apparently ineradicable fact of *akrasia* even in the person who wishes to follow “God’s law” then leads to Paul’s concluding outburst: “Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (7:24). In sum, the body of flesh will invariably raise its head against the commandments of the law and issue in acts of *akrasia*, the result being an almost schizophrenic realization of one’s own “sin”: that one is incapable of always and only following the law. Is there no solution, then? Yes, experiencing the Christ event. That is what Paul goes on to spell out in 8:1–13. “God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his Son ..., he condemned sin in the flesh / so that the just requirement of the law *might be fulfilled* in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit [*pneuma*]” (8:3–4).

***Romans 8:1–11: the role of the pneuma in the solution to the problem of akrasia***

The essence of Paul’s solution is that those who have experienced the Christ event and respond to it with faith have also received from above something he calls *pneuma* (“spirit”). This is something that Christ believers may be *in*, but which may also conversely *live in* them (8:9). It is called “God’s *pneuma*” or “Christ’s *pneuma*” or even “Christ” himself (8:9, since the risen Christ *is pneuma*). I have argued elsewhere that it is best understood along the lines of the Stoic notion of *pneuma*, that is, as a material entity of divine origin that permeates, if not the world at large, then (and precisely only) the material bodies of Christ believers. They have received it in baptism (see a few verses later: 8:14–17) and it will stay with them until their death and resurrection, of which it will itself be instrumental. Paul explicitly makes the latter point in our text: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead *dwells in you*, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your *mortal bodies* also *through* his Spirit that dwells in you” (8:11). How, then, will the *pneuma* bring about what the law could not? The answer is perfectly clear. By 7:14, the law was itself spiritual (*pneumatikos*) and what created



the problem was that human beings were “of the flesh” (*sarkinoi*). Now, however, by the infusion of *pneuma*, they have themselves *become spiritual and thus are able to meet completely the spiritual law*. Now, then, the law will be completely fulfilled, always and everywhere.

Then we can also answer the question from which we began concerning the precise relationship between the law and the Christ event. The latter is required for the former to be fulfilled. The law has *not* been superseded. On the contrary, it is brought to fulfillment in Christ believers *by* the Christ event. That is the reason why Paul may say at 8:2 in his exceedingly compact language that “the *law* of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the *law* of sin and of death.” Paul is here speaking of the same law (namely the Mosaic law), but he qualifies it, or splits it up into two laws, as depending on the qualitative state (as either spiritual or of the flesh) of *those it is addressing*. Here Paul speaks almost as opaquely – but still intelligibly – as Jacques Lacan.

### ***The Stoic character of Paul’s account of both the problem and the solution***

We have answered our first, internal question concerning the relationship between the law and Christ within Paul’s thinking. But what about Paul’s relationship with ancient philosophy, including Stoicism? Here there are four points to be made. *First*, of course, it is in itself highly noteworthy that in order to spell out the difference between the law and Christ, Paul takes up precisely the topic of *akrasia*, which played such an important role in the moral psychology of the philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to the Stoics. This shows that we should see Paul *as one of the philosophers* (in addition to whatever else he also was).<sup>6</sup>

*Second*, if we look more closely at the way he understands both the problem of *akrasia* (7:14–25) and its resolution (8:1–11), we will see that he basically understood *both* phenomena in cognitive terms. What is bad about the problem is the *realization* of the split between, on the one hand, God’s law that one serves with one’s mind (*nous*, 7:25) and in which one delights in one’s inmost self (*kata ton esô anthrôpon*, 7:22) and on the other hand the “other law in my members that is at war with the law of my mind” (7:23, my translation). Similarly, the solution to the problem (in the form of an infusion of *pneuma* into Christ believers’ bodies) is spelled out in cognitive terms: of having the “thought, purpose, or will” (LSJ: the *phronêma*) of the *pneuma*, which leads to “life and peace” – as opposed to having the *phronêma* of the flesh, which leads to death (8:6). Here the *thought* of the *pneuma*, which constitutes the solution by leading to the doing of the law, clearly consists of an understanding of the Christ event itself and all its implications for human beings, including an understanding of the very change from *akrasia* to full goodness whose character Paul is spelling out in the passage itself. Once all of this has been *understood*, then it will also be *done*. So, both the problem and the solution are understood in cognitive terms.

In itself this does not point specifically in the direction of Stoicism. Both Plato and Aristotle would see the problem of *akrasia* and its resolution as (at least, in part) a cognitive problem. Where they differed from the Stoics was that they wanted to *account* for the cognitive problem by introducing a part of soul that was distinctly non-cognitive: some form of desire. Is that not also what we find in Paul, for example, when he speaks of “sin that dwells within me” (7:20)?<sup>7</sup> Here one needs to be careful. The description of a violent split in the mind does not automatically point towards Plato or Aristotle. The Stoics, too, might describe the phenomenon of *akrasia* in that way.<sup>8</sup> What matters here is the theory of psychic entities that *underlies* such a description. Where Plato and Aristotle would partly invoke desire as an independent part of soul, the Stoics stayed cognitive all through and aimed to provide a cognitive understanding even *of* desire.<sup>9</sup>

Have we any access to a theory of psychic entities on Paul's part? I think we have: the fact that the solution to the problem of *akrasia* was understood to be a cognitive one shows that he must have understood the problem itself to be cognitive too. This is a point where the Stoic moral psychology is much closer to Paul than anything we find in Plato and Aristotle. In Stoicism grasping the good takes the form of what may best be called a "conversion": a sudden insight that changes all one's previous perceptions and leads to right action. And that is exactly what we find in Paul too, where the "grasp of the good" (i.e. of the Christ event and its meaning) is something suddenly *believed* (in faith, *pistis*) and *understood* (through the *pneuma*). If that is the logical form of the solution, then it will throw light back over the problem. The problem of *akrasia* as described by Paul in 7:7–25 may only be overcome in the way he describes it in 8:1–11 *if* it is itself understood as a problem that is through and through cognitive. For Paul's solution to work, he must have understood the problem along Stoic lines.

Note one important consequence of this reading. When Paul spells out along Stoic lines the change from being what in effect amounts to a Stoic *prokoptōn* (a person making moral progress: here the Jew who wished to follow the law, but did not always manage to do so) to the Christ believer, he in effect describes the latter as a Stoic sage. *Paul saw Christ believers as (Stoic) sages*. Here, of course, he differs entirely from the Stoics themselves, for whom the sage was as rare as the Phoenix. Much more important, however, is the range of consequences that follow from this Pauline construal of Christ believers. They all basically turn on the relationship of believers to their bodies and the present world. But that is for another discussion.<sup>10</sup>

The *third* point to be made is that the account we have given of the cognitive character of Paul's argument both relies on and supports an understanding of his notion of *pneuma* that sees it in close proximity with the Stoic notion of *pneuma* in two connected respects: that it is an entity that is both material and cognitive. I have developed this understanding of Pauline *pneuma* in a quite different context.<sup>11</sup> But it fits in completely here too – and is in fact explicitly invoked in Romans 8:11 quoted above. It fits in because it explains how the *pneuma* may enter the (fleshly) *bodies* of human beings and generate a change *of them* so that they may themselves become spiritual (*pneumatikoi*). At the same time the *pneuma* is also a cognitive entity, which plays an epistemological role in accounting for believers' coming to possess full knowledge and so becoming wise. In these two respects the Pauline *pneuma* is closely similar to the Stoic one.

***Romans 8:12–13: the Stoic character of Pauline paraenesis  
(moral exhortation)***

The *fourth* point to be made brings us to the last two verses of our passage: 8:12–13. Seen in the light of our account of the pneumatic Christ believers as sages who will always and only do what they should, it may come as a surprise that the Pauline letters are permeated with exhortations on Paul's part that his addressees *should* behave in this or the other way. Why exhort them if they are already wise? This question may seem even more pressing when one notices that in his actual exhortatory practice Paul applies very many of the techniques that the Stoics had themselves developed in their own account of moral exhortation, namely paraenesis.<sup>12</sup> But Stoic paraenesis was explicitly addressed to the non-wise. Am I wrong, then, in claiming that Paul understood his addressees to be wise? On the contrary. When we resolve this apparent discrepancy between Paul and the Stoics, we will find support for the solution in another part of Stoic doctrine. The argument runs as follows.

Stoic exhortation presupposes that its addressees are (only) *prokoptontes*. That means two things. First, they must have *some* grasp of the ultimate good. Second, they may need to have spelled out to them what the good concretely consists in. When that happens, their decision to do the good may also be strengthened. And so they will move further in the direction of becoming fully wise. As against this, Paul's exhortation presupposes – on my proposal – that its addressees are (already) wise and therefore have a full grasp of the ultimate good. They have grasped the Christ event and understood what it means for human behavior, and they are filled with *pneuma*, which will make them do what they have understood. However, it may also be that there remain certain vestiges – what the Stoics (but not Paul) called “scars” – of their earlier value system.<sup>13</sup> In order for these scars to remain inactive, those having them may therefore need to be *reminded* of the understanding that they already have. And that is the situation to which Paul's exhortation is directed. Its addressees *are* wise; they *have* grasped and understood the Christ event and all its implications. But they *may* need to be kept cognitively in shape in the mental fitness center in which Paul is operating.

This feature of Paul's thought explains the way he concludes his whole account of the relationship between living under the law (alone) and living in Christ. Having stated what *has* happened to his addressees, he concludes “paraenetically”: “So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh –/ for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ... [So do that!]” (8:12–13). Thus, directly contrary to the way the issue is usually understood, the fact that Paul engages in paraenesis does not go against the idea that his addressees are already wise. On the contrary, it presupposes it. Pauline paraenesis – and here it does resemble Stoic paraenesis – does not aim at *changing* its addressees, only at strengthening them in a grasp that they already have.

### ***Paul, the Stoic***

In summary, in Romans 7:7–8:13 Paul draws on a number of specifically Stoic ideas. *Akrasia* is a cognitive disaster, which may be solved through a cognitive change that consists in a full grasp of “the good” (here: the Christ event). This change is operated by a power that is both cognitive and material: the *pneuma*. The Pauline Christ believers are best understood as sages in the Stoic sense. In spite of this there may be a need for paraenesis. But this too should be understood in a way that differs from, but is also congruent with, the Stoic understanding of that procedure. Thus Paul fundamentally conceived of his Christ-believing addressees along distinctly Stoic lines.

### **John on how to overcome Jesus' death: John 13:31–17:26**

When we turn from Paul's letter to the Romans, which is the earlier text (from around 54 CE), to the Gospel of John (around 100 CE), we are moving into a superficially quite different world. Where the texts from Paul are letters that address specific groups of Christ believers with a basically paraenetic aim, and where the warrant for Paul's exhortation derives from the Christ event and hence from Paul's conception of the risen Christ rather than the earthly Jesus, the genre of John is that of a narrative gospel that basically tells the story of the life of Jesus *until* his “return” to God in heaven. With such a difference, if it was relatively easy to see points of contact between Paul and philosophy, one would expect it to be much more difficult to find similar points in the case of John.

However, John is a very peculiar narrative, and when it begins – in its famous prologue (1:1–18) – by stating that “[i]n the beginning was the *logos*, and the *logos* was with God, and

the *logos* was God” (1:1),<sup>14</sup> it immediately strikes a tone that is nothing if not philosophical. That tone is kept throughout the gospel. We therefore need an approach that I have called “narrative philosophical exegesis” to capture what John is saying. In what follows I will focus on a single, substantial text in John – Jesus’ so-called “Farewell speeches” in chapters 13–17 (13:31–17:26) – and argue that there is a range of problems in scholarship that may be solved once one brings in ideas from contemporary philosophy, in particular Stoicism. As it happens, these ideas are closely similar to those we have already met in connection with Paul: that Jesus’ addressees (the disciples) are to be understood as being fully wise; that they will therefore act on the moral maxim that Jesus articulates to them as a direct consequence of the Christ event itself; and that they are actually able to do so because upon Jesus’ “departure,” that is, his death and resurrection, they will receive a substitute for his earthly presence which is the *pneuma* in the shape of a specifically Johannine entity, the Paraclete.<sup>15</sup> Thus here too we are in a field where underlying elements of a specifically Stoic cosmology, epistemology and moral psychology play together to articulate and give coherent form to the overall message of Jesus’ speech.

### ***Three problems in the scholarly understanding of John 13:31–17:26***

Critical scholarship has wrestled with at least three connected problems in trying to reach a satisfactory understanding of this text. There is general agreement about its overall shape. Once John’s account of Jesus’ activity in Galilee and Jerusalem is over (end of chapter 12), he clearly embarks in 13:1 on the “passion story.” However, that story does not begin until 18:1. In between Jesus shares a meal with his disciples on the eve of Easter (13:1–3), which contains, first, the so-called “foot-washing scene” (13:4–17), next, a scene in which Jesus almost forces Judas to undertake his treachery (13:18–30) – and then the scene of our text, in which Jesus speaks of his own departure and how the disciples should and will overcome that. Problems begin in that long stretch of text, 13:31–17:26.

The most fundamental problem is (1) that of unity. Is 13:31–17:26 a single, coherent piece that gives the whole of Jesus’ final speech, as it were *the* “farewell speech”? Or is it a conglomerate of several farewell speeches? Chapter 14 looks like a single speech of its own in which John is primarily concerned to show (a) that the disciples do not understand Jesus’ talk about his departure (13:36–38, 14:4–7 and 8–11, 14:22), (b) that Jesus promises them a substitute for himself which he calls “another Paraclete” (14:16) and characterizes as “the *pneuma* of truth” (14:17), and (c) that he also promises his own return, either in the distant future (14:1–3) or as something about to happen very soon when Jesus and God (!) will “come to” Jesus’ followers “and make our home with them” (14:23). Already here one meets the problem of how to understand the precise relationship between the Paraclete and Jesus and also the precise relationship between Jesus’ distant and more immediate return. Is the text then coherent even within chapter 14? The question of unity is further raised by the end of the chapter (14:27–31), which looks distinctly valedictory (see 14:27: “Peace I leave with you ...”) and in any case ends with a famous interpretatory crux when Jesus says “Rise, let us be on our way” (14:31) – and then continues speaking for three more chapters.

The question of unity becomes even more acute in what follows. Chapter 15 consists of (x) a parable of Jesus as a vine (15:1–8), (y) an elaboration of the *love command* that was very briefly introduced in 13:34–35 (15:9–17), and (z) a section on “the world’s” hatred for Jesus and the disciples (15:18–25). These are basically new topics. By contrast, chapter 16 appears to repeat the content of chapter 14. Once again, (a) there is the question of the disciples’ lack of understanding (16:5–6 and 16:16–33). Once again (b) Jesus speaks of the Paraclete

(16:7–15, cf. 15:26–27). And once again (c) there is the question of understanding the meaning of Jesus' claim that in "a little while ... you will see me" (16:16–19). So, if chapter 15 brings in something new and chapter 16 is basically mere repetition, how do the three chapters 14–16 *together* constitute a unity? It is easier with chapter 17, which consists of a prayer by Jesus to God on behalf of the disciples. This looks like a conclusion to the whole scene. But here too there are difficulties. For instance, Jesus explicitly states that the disciples do know and understand everything (17:6–8), as they precisely did not in chapters 14 and 16. This confidence about the disciples parallels the picture given of them in chapter 15, where Jesus at one point says this: "I have called you friends, because I *have made known* [egnôrisa] to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (15:15). In sum, do chapters 14–17 constitute a unity across these difficulties?

The second and third problems to be noted focus on two of the issues that gave rise to the sense of disunity. (2) Do the disciples actually understand or do they not? *If* the text is a unity, then why does it describe their understanding in such a complicated manner? And the third problem: (3) How should one understand (m) the relationship between Jesus and the Paraclete and (n) the time frame for Jesus' return? And why are the two issues described in such a complex way?<sup>16</sup>

### ***Unity: the structure of 13:31–17:26 as a piece of Pauline paraklêsis***

Scholars agree that the literary genre of our text is that of the farewell speech, of which there were several examples in antiquity.<sup>17</sup> As a general characterization this fits.<sup>18</sup> However, there is one feature of the text that has not been given the emphasis it deserves. At the very beginning (13:31–35) Jesus makes two announcements that may in a precise way be taken to structure the text as a whole. He first (13:31–33) states that he is about to depart from his disciples. Next (13:34–35), he gives them a "new commandment": "that you love one another" (13:34). Together, these two announcements may be seen as constituting a rhetorical *propositio* for the whole ensuing speech, stating its overall theme. Jesus' departure is treated in chapters 14 and 16, the love command in chapter 15. Chapter 17 has a special function, but we saw that with regard to the disciples' understanding, it belongs with chapter 15: whereas in chapters 14 and 16 the disciples do not understand talk about Jesus' departure, in chapters 15 and 17 they are explicitly taken by Jesus to understand.

If 13:31–35 constitutes a *propositio* for the rest of the speech, the question arises whether there is any special connection between the two parts of the *propositio*, Jesus' departure and the love command. At its deepest level that is a philosophical question. If the sequence of the two themes is not just accidental but intentional, is there anything about Jesus' departure (which the disciples do not yet fully understand) that *explains* why they should love one another as Jesus' friends – and will come to do so *once* they have obtained the required knowledge? I insist on calling this a philosophical question since it turns on the issue of knowledge and understanding. Jesus apparently aims to tell his disciples something that turns on their *understanding* of *what* is going to happen and what this *means* for them. So, what is the logical connection between the two themes?<sup>19</sup>

To further clarify this question we may bring in the notion of *paraklêsis*, which is central in Paul. He uses the term and its verbal counterpart, *parakalein*, in two senses. In the more common sense, it means "moral exhortation" and "exhort." Here it refers to the Pauline practice of paraenesis that we have already considered. In another use, *paraklêsis* means "comfort."<sup>20</sup> But the term remains the same. We may bring out this fact by translating *paraklêsis* and *parakalein* as "encouragement" and "encourage." In his "exhortation

encouragement” (paraenesis) Paul encourages his addressees to do what they already know should be done. In his “comfort encouragement” he rather comforts them by appealing to what has already happened in the Christ event and spelling out how that should make them rejoice (Greek: *chairein* and *chara*) vis-à-vis the suffering and tribulation (*thlipsis*) that they encounter in their relations with the world.<sup>21</sup> In both cases they are being encouraged. But the focus differs. Paul’s comfort focuses on what has happened in the Christ event. His exhortation focuses on how his addressees should behave *in the light of* that event. But a tight logical connection is implied by Paul’s use of the same term for both.

Drawing on this Pauline distinction, we may understand Jesus’ first announcement, in John 13:31–33, as spelled out in chapter 14 and parts of chapter 16 (in particular 16:16–33) as comfort encouragement. Jesus encourages his disciples against the background of his departure, not least by telling them of his return and the coming of the Paraclete. “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (14:1 and 14:27). “Pain [*lupê*] has filled your hearts” (16:6, my translation) and “you have pain [*lupê*] now; *but* I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice [*chairein*], and no one will take your joy [*chara*] from you” (16:22). This is closely similar to the comfort encouragement that Paul gives to his addressees.

By contrast, Jesus’ second announcement in the *propositio* (13:34–35) as spelled out in chapter 15 is clearly exhortation encouragement (paraenesis). The parable of the vine (I am the vine, God is the vine-grower, you are the branches that must bear much fruit) and the exhortation to love one another are permeated with imperatives that have the same logical form as those in Paul’s paraenesis. They presuppose that the addressees are already where they are exhorted to be, and the imperatives are intended to make them stick to that. As Jesus says in John 15:4 and 15:9: “Abide in me,” “abide in my love.”

### ***The dynamic movement in time in 13:36–17:26***

Suppose that Jesus is engaged in comfort encouragement in chapters 14 and 16, where it is also stated that the disciples *do not yet* understand, and in exhortation encouragement in chapter 15 (cf. chapter 17), where they are explicitly stated to know. Then he will address the disciples in two distinct ways in the concrete narrative situation just before his death. In chapters 14 and 16 he addresses them in “the fictional present.” They feel pain *now* (hearing of Jesus’ imminent departure), but should also be comforted by the fact that certain good things will happen to them immediately upon Jesus’ death. In chapters 15 and 17, by contrast, Jesus addresses the disciples (in the fictional present) in the way they are *going* to be *once* he has departed and once those good things *have* happened that will turn their present pain into joy. Then they will no longer need any comfort, but rather exhortation that they *remain* where they have now come to be.

This reading introduces an element of dynamic movement into the text. In chapter 14 (beginning at 13:36) Jesus gives comfort to his disciples in the fictional present in the way we have seen. By contrast, in chapter 15 (and in fact up until 16:15) he looks into the future and describes them as they *will* be once they have received the Paraclete (15:1–17). This dynamic movement from (a) 13:13–14:31 (comfort in the fictional present) into (b) 15:1–16:15 (exhortation in the fictional future) is reflected in the way Jesus speaks of “the world.” In section a, “the world” only makes a few brief appearances (14:17, 14:19 and 14:22). At the end of chapter 14, however, it plays a much more important role when Jesus states that “the ruler of this world is coming” (14:30). Jesus first reacts by saying that this ruler (alias Satan) “has no share in me” (14:30, my translation) and then utters the famous words: “Rise, let us be on our way” (14:31). Whither? Certainly not to *meet* him.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, when Jesus

goes immediately on to say that “I am [*Egô eimi*] the true vine, etc.” (15:1), he is developing the image of the group of Jesus himself and his followers that will *turn their back* on the world and its ruler. Where chapter 14 gradually brings in the world until it ends up speaking of its ruler, Jesus reacts by bringing in himself (corresponding to the world’s ruler) *and the disciples as full members of the Jesus group* (corresponding to the world at large). To *them* he may precisely say: *Remain in me* or *my love*. And he may call *them* his friends because he has made everything known to them (15:15). By now, that is, *after* Jesus’ departure, they constitute a group of their own that is directly attacked by the world. This is then further spelled out in 15:18–16:15. Here they are first explicitly contrasted, and precisely as the group of Jesus’ friends, with the world (15:18–25). Next the point is taken into chapter 16, now focusing on the role that the Paraclete will play in their relations with the world (15:26–27 and 16:7–15). And here their future trouble with the world is spelled out most explicitly (16:1–4) when Jesus says that “they will put you out of the synagogues,” etc. In sum, the dynamic movement from section *a* to *b* turns on a change from the fictional present to the fictional future when the disciples will have received the Paraclete and then stand united as the group of Jesus’ friends in direct confrontation with the world.

Why, then, does John’s Jesus go back – in section *c*, 16:16–33 – to provide comfort encouragement in the fictional present?<sup>23</sup> Apparently, John aims to focus on the crucial issue of the disciples’ understanding. Here they are again very explicitly described in the fictional present as lacking the understanding which we know they will eventually obtain. This is spelled out in 16:16–19. And it lies behind the fact that “Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice ...” (16:20). It is true that Jesus goes on to declare that “[t]he hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures” (16:25), to which the disciples happily reply: “Yes, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure of speech!” (16:29). But this is immediately rejected by Jesus (16:31–33): they will all soon be scattered and leave him alone. Clearly, in all this John is out to emphasize the role of the disciples’ lack of understanding. Apparently, they *could* not understand fully until after Jesus had departed. At the same time he also intimates that even though they do not yet fully understand, they are perhaps somewhat further on the road towards understanding than they were in section *a*. At least, he does say that “you ... have believed [*pepisteukate*] that I came from God” (16:27). But then he also adds (16:28) – and this is actually one version of the required *full* knowledge of Jesus – that “I came from the Father and have come into the world [this the disciples did understand, cf. 16:30]; again, I am leaving the world *and going to the Father*” (this they have not yet understood). With this degree of knowledge among the disciples, Jesus may then go on in chapter 17 to pray to God on their behalf *as if* they had the required knowledge (see 17:6–8). In that way Jesus’ prayer provides a sort of bridge from the fictional present into the fictional future when they will fully know.

### Answering the philosophical question

We asked whether there is something in the motif of Jesus’ departure that explains why the disciples should love one another as Jesus’ friends – and indeed will come to do so once they have obtained the required knowledge. In other words, how may one explain the dynamic movement from section *a* into *b* and again from *c* into *d*? How will the disciples obtain full knowledge? What is its content? How will it make the disciples friends of Jesus? And how will it make them do what they should do *as* Jesus’ friends, namely, act on the love command?

In a way we already know the answer: the disciples will receive the Paraclete. When that has happened, they will understand everything: that Jesus has died on their own behalf, as

their friend (see 15:13); that he has been resurrected and gone to his Father; and that the appropriate response on their own part to Jesus' love for them is that they *similarly* love one another (15:12) whereby they will fully be Jesus' friends (15:14). All of this, which constitutes *the* content of the Christ event, they will fully understand once they have received the Paraclete. And so they will also apply it in practice. However, this answer may be made clearer if we remember that the Paraclete is explicitly identified by John as *pneuma* – and if we then bring in the Stoic notion of *pneuma* as we did in the case of Paul. In Stoicism, the *pneuma* is both a material and a cognitive entity. It may be infused into human bodies and it may in this way generate knowledge in human beings. In John the same thing happened initially to Jesus himself. In the baptism scene of chapter 1, John the Baptist bore witness that God sent his *pneuma* down upon Jesus (1:29–34). In this way Jesus of Nazareth became the bearer in his own body of the divine *pneuma*. But this event also had a cognitive side to it. For the material *pneuma* is also the divine, cognitive *logos* of which the Prologue speaks, the one that “became flesh” (1:14) *precisely when the pneuma descended upon Jesus*.<sup>24</sup> So, Jesus also came to know. Now this is exactly what will also come to pass for the disciples when they receive the Paraclete, which is “the *pneuma* of truth” (14:17, 15:26, 16:13). Then they will come to know Jesus' *logos*: who he is, that he came from and went back to heaven, and what the purpose was of that. But in addition to this cognitive side of the disciples' experience there is a material one. The disciples will receive the *pneuma* within their bodies (thereby being able to remain *in* the Jesus-vine just as he remains *in* them, 15:4), which explains why they will by then “bear much fruit” and *act* on the love command.<sup>25</sup>

We should conclude that underlying the whole text of John 13:31–17:26 there is a philosophical question of what explains the dynamic movement or *change* from the situation of the disciples in the fictional present (sections *a* and *c*) into their situation in the fictional future (sections *b* and *d*) – and even more: that the text also provides a simple and clear answer to that question. What accounts for the change is the fact that upon Jesus' departure the disciples will receive the Paraclete and that the Paraclete is *pneuma with the features that we know from Stoicism*.

### Jesus and the Paraclete: the immediate and the distant future

Then we may also solve the second and third problems we identified, regarding the relationship between Jesus and the Paraclete and between the immediate and the more distant future. Jesus and the Paraclete are one and the same figure in a very precise way. The Jesus who is speaking and acting in John's Gospel is a (possibly Stoically conceived) amalgam of two entities: Jesus of Nazareth and the *pneuma* that he received in the baptism scene.<sup>26</sup> The Jesus who dies and is raised to heaven is the same composite figure. But that figure may come to be present on earth again, but now within the disciples and in dis-amalgamated form, *as pneuma*. That *pneuma* is the Paraclete. Though Jesus departs in one form, he also returns more or less immediately in a slightly different form, namely, as nothing but *pneuma*, which is nevertheless the form that *makes* him what he both was and is: Jesus *Christ*. There is absolutely no reason, therefore, to be surprised that Jesus speaks rather indiscriminately in chapter 14 of the coming of the Paraclete and of his own return: he is referring to the same event.

Then we can also understand the relationship between the immediate and the more distant future in Jesus' statements about his own return. Jesus will return in the immediate future *as pneuma* (the Paraclete). But Jesus (possibly the whole package of Jesus' human body as transformed by the *pneuma*) will also return in the more distant future when human beings too will be resurrected according to the traditional picture. There is no need to choose here. Both events may equally well take place as soon as one sees how to differentiate between them.



## Conclusion on Paul and John as Stoics

The relationship between Stoicism and such central early Christians as Paul and John is complicated by a number of factors. Two stand out. First, for reasons that had to do with the content of their message, both Paul and John stood in strong opposition to “the world” in the sense of everything that did not immediately fall under their conception of what had happened in the Christ event. Second, to the extent that they would at all engage with anything belonging to the world, they had a strong preference for things Jewish for the obvious reason that they saw the whole Christ story in direct continuation of Jewish patterns of thought. Both facts imply that neither Paul nor John would place any value on “philosophy” as a distinctly or originally Greco-Roman practice. They were therefore very reluctant to employ technical terminology that might seem to belong to that kind of social practice.

It is against this background that one must understand what one finds in these two writers: no distinct or explicitly technical use of any form of Greco-Roman philosophy, *but still* a practice that reveals a much more thorough acquaintance with philosophy than appears on the surface. To see this, one must begin by realizing that the two writers do address issues in a manner that is distinctly philosophical. We saw that with great clarity in Paul. And the same holds for John in our text when he develops the motif of the disciples’ *lack* of understanding and their eventual *acquisition* of understanding through reception of the *pneuma*. That motif is in itself a philosophical one even though it is articulated in an exclusively narrative manner in John’s text. And it immediately leads on to the other philosophical question of exactly what they are expected to understand. Once one has realized this philosophical dimension of both texts, one must go on to consider the extent to which any scholarly problems about the texts (e.g. in the case of John, the question of its unity) may be solved if we postulate an underlying layer of philosophical awareness in them. This procedure will of course be greatly strengthened if one is also able to tie in any philosophical ideas with the presence of certain concepts that are in themselves distinctly philosophical. But that is not a necessary condition. The ultimate criterion for this heuristic type of reading lies in the extent to which the invocation of philosophical concepts and ideas *helps to understand better the texts themselves*. We have seen in both cases that it does help. And we have seen that it is specifically Stoic concepts and ideas that help.

## Stoicism in early Christianity beyond the New Testament

What about Stoicism in Christian texts later than the New Testament? This topic has unfortunately only received very sketchy treatment. The only real exception is Michel Spanneut’s (1969) account of Stoicism in the church fathers of the second century (from Clement of Rome to Clement of Alexandria). This is an excellent sourcebook, but it does not engage sufficiently deeply with the ways Stoicism may have informed parts of the thought of the various second-century Christians. A more recent attempt to open up this whole field is Rasimus et al. (2010), which discusses individual texts belonging either to the New Testament or to second-century (Christian) Gnosticism, in particular. That leaves out the orthodox Christian writers up until and including the great Origen (184/185–254/255). The latter’s knowledge, use and rejection of Stoicism is a major topic of its own that cries out for renewed research.<sup>27</sup>

Investigation of the influence of Stoicism on Christian writers of the second and early third centuries immediately plunges the scholar into the maelstrom of the interaction in second-century philosophy between Stoicism and Platonism, which eventually led to the victory of the latter. This battle had huge repercussions among Christian writers of those two centuries

once they began to articulate their Christian beliefs more explicitly in philosophical terminology than their New Testament colleagues had done. Here too we may see the Christians as being part of the philosophical discussion rather than standing outside it – and even more banefully, as partners in the Platonic takeover of the philosophical scene from the Stoics.<sup>28</sup> This development, which was to have a huge influence on almost all later Christian thinking as a form of Platonism, was prefigured in the first half of the first century by the Jewish Platonist, Philo of Alexandria, whose relationship with Stoicism is another topic that calls for investigation.<sup>29</sup> It is my own contention that the second-century Platonic takeover of Christianity drastically changed the understanding of the earliest, first-century Christian writings that make up the New Testament. They – or at least those we have been looking at here – were far more Stoic than Platonic.

## Notes

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the New Testament are from the *New Revised Standard Version* (1995).
- 2 This is also true in the passage in Acts. After all, Luke makes Paul's Stoic interlocutors mock him.
- 3 This might be shown by following the line from Rudolf Bultmann's treatment of Paul and the Stoic-Cynic diatribe (Bultmann 1910) and Adolf Bonhöffer's work on Epictetus and the New Testament (Bonhöffer 1911, see also Bultmann 1912) via Max Pohlenz on Paul and the Stoa (Pohlenz 1949) and J. N. Sevenster on Paul and Seneca (Sevenster 1961) to Abraham J. Malherbe on Paul and the "popular philosophers" (Malherbe 1987, 1989, 2000, 2013), Samuel Vollenweider again on Epictetus and the New Testament (Vollenweider 1989 and 2013), and Engberg-Pedersen (2000, 2010), Matt A. Jackson-McCabe (2001) and Runar M. Thorsteinsson (2010).
- 4 I should note that I do also find traces of a genetic influence from Stoicism on both John and Paul, but in this chapter I stay with the methodologically more interesting approach.
- 5 Emphasizing Paul's Jewishness is one of the central, correct insights in the so-called "New perspective on Paul." Another recent insight is that this does not in the least go against studying him also in his Hellenistic and Roman contexts (Engberg-Pedersen 2001).
- 6 This is one attempt on my part to take to the extreme the attempt to overcome the divide between ancient Christianity and all the rest.
- 7 For a particularly forceful reading of Paul as being Platonic here see Wasserman 2008.
- 8 See, in particular, Plutarch's account in *De virtute morali* 441c–d and 446f–447a (both in *SVF* 3.459).
- 9 For more on this, see e.g. Engberg-Pedersen 1990: ch. 8, "Intention and Passion: Desire as Belief."
- 10 What I have in mind is Paul's root asceticism with regard to sexuality (see 1 Cor 6:11–7:40) and his radical disengagement from the present world (Rom 12–13).
- 11 Namely, in order to give an adequate sense to Paul's claim in 1 Corinthians 15 (see 15:35–50, in particular) that at the resurrection of believers, their "psychic body" (*psychikon sōma*) will be changed into a "pneumatic body" (*a pneumatikon soma*, 15:44), see Engberg-Pedersen 2010: ch. 1.
- 12 I developed this point in Engberg-Pedersen 2004.
- 13 For the Stoic notion of a "scar," see Seneca's reference to Zeno in *On Anger* 1.16.7 (*SVF* 1.215).
- 14 *New Revised Standard Version* with *logos* for "Word."
- 15 Differently translated in the tradition as "Advocate," "Intercessor," "Comforter," "Exhortor." I keep the transliterated form. A classic discussion of this figure in John is Brown 1966.
- 16 It almost goes without saying that all these questions are standard in scholarship. One cannot say that they have been solved.
- 17 The classic account of the genre is Munck 1950.
- 18 There is one caveat, though. Whereas in a traditional farewell speech the speaker may tell of his own life as it were on its own, in John everything Jesus says about himself, primarily his whereabouts, is very specifically *intended* for his addressees, the disciples. Compare below on the Johannine farewell speech as a piece of *paraklêsis*.
- 19 One feature of my proposed narrative philosophical approach is that it sees the text to be implicitly raising a philosophical question to begin with, which it then goes on to answer, though still by exclusively narrative means. Compare my analysis of John 9–10 in Engberg-Pedersen 2013.

- 20 A striking example is 2 Corinthians 1 and 7 where Paul repeatedly contrasts his own and his addressees' suffering (*thlipsis*) with the comfort provided by God (2 Cor 1:3–8 and 7:4–6).
- 21 For *chara* in connection with *thlipsis* and *paraklêsis*, see 2 Cor 7:4 and 7:5–7.
- 22 This is unfortunately the way it is almost invariably understood by commentators, who recall a somewhat similar expression in the Gospel of Mark (14:42). Against this, I am suggesting that Jesus is calling upon his disciples to leave the world *behind*.
- 23 Scholars regularly discuss how far the section that begins with 15:1 should be taken to go. One popular suggestion is: until 16:4a. Just for the record, it is worth noting that a nineteenth-century commentator on John, the excellent F. Godet (1869), divided the text in the way I am also doing: 13:31–14:31; 15:1–16:15; 16:16–33, and of course 17:1–26. Godet's title for 15:1–16:15 is particularly apt: "The Position of the Disciples in the World after the Infusion of the Holy Spirit." An equally admirable twentieth-century commentator, E. H. Dodd (1953: 410–16), took the whole of chapters 15 and 16 together, but also in fact saw the special place of 16:16–33: "With xvi. 16 we seem to be brought back to the theme of the dialogue in xiii. 31–xiv. 31" (415).
- 24 I have argued for this – unorthodox – understanding of the incarnation in Engberg-Pedersen 2012.
- 25 We moderns may have problems about taking the *in* relation so literally. It is a virtue of Stoicism, in particular, to insist that it should be so taken.
- 26 The Stoic amalgam would be a case of proper, Stoic *krasis*; see *SVF* 2.463–481, *De mixtione*, with the subtitle *sôma dia sômatos chôrei* ("a body penetrates a body").
- 27 Remember how often Origen is cited in *SVF*.
- 28 One very good example of this whole issue, focusing on Justin Martyr (mid-second century), is a series of articles by Thorsteinsson (2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014).
- 29 Again, it was huge as may be seen from the number of citations in *SVF*.

## Further reading

A. J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) renewed the attempt to situate Paul among the popular philosophers in the field of moral exhortation. Malherbe's book, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) collects some of the articles underlying the earlier book. The article "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament" (*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.26.1, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992, pp. 267–333) is a masterful summary of Malherbe's approach. T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; and Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000) compares the ethical part of Paul's thought conceptually with Stoicism at a more fundamental, philosophical level. The later book, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) does the same for the basic cosmology and theology that underlies Paul's ethics. R. M. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), rightly focuses on the Roman contemporaries on either side (Seneca, Musonius, Epictetus and Paul in Romans, the First Letter of Peter and the First Letter of Clement). Finally, a volume of essays on *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (ed. T. Rasmussen, T. Engberg-Pedersen and I. Dunderberg, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010) attempts to take the question beyond the New Testament into the second century.

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### 3

# PLOTINUS AND THE PLATONIC RESPONSE TO STOICISM

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## Introduction

By around 200 CE we hear very little about active Stoic philosophers. Galen, a Platonist, and Alexander of Aphrodisias, a Peripatetic, were deeply engaged with Stoic theory but hardly at all with any contemporary Stoics. By the middle of the third century, the dominance of the Platonic school meant that only there would there be found critical scrutiny of Stoicism. It is to Plotinus that we owe the most extensive and penetrating account of where Stoicism went wrong, at least from a Platonic perspective. His arguments more or less set the tone for all of the later so-called Neoplatonists. Although within two generations or so after Plotinus, some sort of *rapprochement* with Stoicism was beginning, particularly in the gradual incorporation of Epictetus' *Handbook* into the Platonic curriculum, Plotinus' reasons for rejecting Stoicism remain the standard ones. That, at any rate, is my justification for devoting most of this chapter to him.

Porphry in his biography of Plotinus tells us that "Stoic and Peripatetic doctrines are blended into his writings, though they are not obvious" (14, 4–5). Clearly, this "blending" does not suggest uncritical endorsement either of Stoicism or of Aristotle's philosophy. Plotinus is in fact relentlessly critical of all philosophical claims that he regards as incompatible with Platonism. Nevertheless, there is at the same time much in Stoicism that he admires, particularly in ethics or moral psychology, broadly speaking. As for Aristotle and for Peripatetics generally, he is prepared to treat them as dissident Platonists, mistaken regarding the precise nature of fundamental principles yet valuable contributors to the project of articulating the lineaments of the hierarchically ordered universe. Unfortunately, Porphyry does not mention any works of Stoic philosophers read by Plotinus or studied in his seminars. It seems highly unlikely, given his scholastic approach to the history of philosophy in general and his evident deep engagement with Stoicism as a challenge to Platonism, that Plotinus did not have an extensive knowledge of the Stoic sources. But, alas, this fact doesn't help us much since so few of these sources are extant. Indeed, it is possible that some of Plotinus's remarks about Stoicism are based on Peripatetic sources which are themselves critical of Stoic doctrine. For the most part I am going to steer clear of issues pertaining to the development of and variations on Stoic doctrine through the so-called Middle Stoa and into the Roman Stoa. "Stoicism" is for Plotinus very clearly the name of the most serious version of "anti-Platonism" still on

offer in the third century. It is difficult to imagine that Plotinus would have been content with any putative refinements of Stoic teaching that would have retained any substantive connection with the Old Stoa.<sup>1</sup>

### **Materialism and mechanism**

I use the terms “materialism” and “mechanism” to conform to the way Plotinus understands the central principles of his Stoic opponents. Materialism is the view that the only things that exist in the world are bodies, that is, three-dimensional solids, and their properties (cf. *SVF* 1.88). Thus, the Stoic recognition of the existence of “incorporeals” is not a denial of materialism, since these incorporeals – place, void, time, and “sayables” (*lekta*) – do not exist independently of bodies. By “mechanism” I refer to the support for a principle of causal closure, namely, efficient causes are necessary and sufficient for their effects (cf. *SVF* 1.89; 2.336). And only bodies are efficient causes; indeed, the only kind of cause is efficient cause (cf. *SVF* 1.90; 2.363). Materialism and mechanism are apparently taken both by the Stoics and Plotinus to be mutually entailing doctrines, although this is not obviously so, since the existence of immaterial, independently existing entities with no causal power is at least a logical possibility.

Plotinus’ reasons for rejecting both materialism and mechanism go hand in hand. That is, the postulation of immaterial entities is made according to an argument from effect to cause: only certain immaterial entities correctly described can provide adequate causal explanations for various phenomena. For example, the phenomenon of sameness in difference, that is, two or more things having an identical property cannot be explained unless we postulate immaterial and separate Forms; the existence of knowledge, and so-called higher cognition generally cannot be explained unless immaterial intellect exists and is capable of existing separately from bodies; and the very existence of things even minimally complex in their constitution cannot be explained unless there exists an absolutely simple or incomposite (and hence immaterial) first principle of all that is their cause. Plotinus assumes that this first principle, dubbed by Plotinus “one” mostly in deference to the tradition he is following, is identical with Plato’s Idea of the Good. Hence, this principle also serves to explain the possibility of objectivity in ethics. I will return at the end of this chapter to the difficulty Plotinus sees in the Stoics’ assenting to objectivity in ethics and at the same time rejecting the existence of an immaterial Idea of the Good.

Plotinus attacks Stoic materialism both because it is thought to entail and to be entailed by mechanism but also because the Stoic recognition of incorporeals generates an internal inconsistency in Stoic ontology. In answer to the question “if all existents are bodies, what is the ontological status of incorporeals?” the Stoics answer that the primary genus is “something” (*ti*) of which corporeals and incorporeals are the principal species (*SVF* 2.329, 330, 332). Incorporeals do not exist; they merely “subsist” (*huphistasthai*, see *SVF* 2.541).<sup>2</sup> Plotinus’s reply to this claim is an argument similar to that used by Aristotle to show that being is not a genus (*Enn.* VI 1. 25, 7–10; cf. *Metaph.* 3.3, 998b22–27; 11.1, 1059b31–34). The argument is that if “existents” and “subsistents” are species of a single genus, then there must be differentia for each. But these differentia either exist or they merely subsist. In either case, they will themselves then belong to the two primary species as subspecies. But then again, differentiating properties will be needed, ad infinitum. But if there are no differentia, then there are no species, and then there is no genus like the putative primary genus “something.”

The import of this argument for Plotinus is considerable, as indeed it is for Aristotle. For if being is not a genus, then there can be no science of being or ontology unless it can be

shown that somehow all the things that have being have sufficient unity to be considered universally and hence to be scientifically knowable. Suppose Plotinus were arguing against a hard-headed materialist who unequivocally denied the “subsistence” of the incorporeals and instead maintained that only bodies exist. So, “to be” is “to be a body.” But what then becomes of, say, the surfaces of bodies which cannot by definition be themselves bodies? If they also exist, then it is false that “to be” means “to be a body.” And in that case, the question “what is being?” is not dissolvable by answering disjunctively, as it were (“to be” is “to be either a body or a surface of a body”), because a list of all the things that are or all the kinds of things there are does not even begin to tell us what being is.<sup>3</sup> In any case, the Stoics are evidently not *extreme* materialists in this sense. Yet, their incorporeal “subsistents” do not serve to eliminate or even conceal the problem. Plotinus’s point might be summarized by saying that any philosophy, committed to wisdom about the world has to have an ontology. Plotinus, like Aristotle, thinks that a defensible ontology will perforce be a theology, or at least it will end up vindicating the anti-materialist position.<sup>4</sup> Plotinus does not share Aristotle’s view that the primary referent of “being” is *ousia*, since he follows Plato in maintaining that the Good or the One is “above *ousia*.” But this dispute is posterior to the anti-materialist position that both share.

Plotinus marshals a panoply of arguments against the Stoic division of the subgenus body into four species: “substrate” (*hupokeimenon*), “qualified” (*poion*), “disposed” (*pôs echon*), and “relatively disposed” (*pros ti pôs echon*) (see VI 1. 25, 1–5). The general import of these arguments is that if the above divisions of body are really coordinate species, then there is no priority and posteriority in being among them; in that case, there is no meaning in the claim that there are subjects or substrates and properties (including relative properties which depend on them (VI 1. 25, 12–33). But if the ontological priority of the substrate is conceded, is the substrate just body or is it just matter? Plotinus elsewhere refers to a Stoic definition of matter as “body without quality or magnitude” (II 4. 1, 13–14; cf. *SVF* 2.309, 326). But if this is their view, then matter, not body is the substrate. Then, either “matter” refers to another type of body or else it refers to a potential body. In the latter case, potency would be prior to actuality; in the former, then there really is no difference between matter and body, and consequently the presumed priority of the substrate must be abandoned (VI 1. 26, 1–17). Plotinus thinks it is not reasonably open to the Stoics to reject the notion of potentiality altogether, principally because it would make impossible a science of nature. In particular, there would then be nothing about the present that would be in any way relevant to the future. We could not say, for example, that things will or will likely be in a certain way because things now have the potentiality for being in that way rather than in another. And this would indeed be an expensive concession, given not merely Stoics determinism, but their claim that the deterministic future was perspicuous to our intellects, or at least to a divine intellect.

Owing to the Stoics’ faulty ontology of the sensible world – which of course for them is the only world there is – they are bound to have an inadequate account of causality. Causal closure needs to be breached. That is, this principle is explanatorily inadequate.<sup>5</sup> First, potency will have no explanatory role even in the type of causality the Stoics recognize. As we shall see below, this will lead the Stoics to hold, among other things, that potencies for contraries, as in choices among alternatives, do not exist. Second, the Stoics are not able to employ form in an explanatory role given that only bodies are causes. Either a form is a body or an incorporeal. If it is the former, it is particular, limited in time and place, and so incapable of explaining the nature of anything; if it is incorporeal, it can have no causal or explanatory role. For form to serve to explain the nature of anything it is necessary for form to be really

distinct from individuality or particularity. To say of an individual that “it is what it is and not another thing” echoing Bishop Butler, may indeed be wise words, but they explain nothing unless “what it is” refers to a nature distinct from its individuality. But the Stoics hold that only individuals or particulars exist (see *SVF* 2.361). Finally, the Stoics cannot legitimately appeal to final causality or goal-directed behavior in the explanation of anything despite their use of such terms as “providence” and “fate.”<sup>6</sup> The basic reason why this is so is that for final causality to explain anything, the good at which things aim must be external to the agent, not immanent. If it were the latter, then there would be no distinct explanatory role in the words “it was done in order to achieve some good” in comparison with the words “it was done because of antecedent or internal causes.” But for the Stoics, even god is a body and immanent in the universe (*SVF* 2.526, 527). So, good provides no independent criterion for assessing anything that happens. If everything happens for the best just because it happens, then we might as well say that everything happens for the worst.<sup>7</sup>

According to Plotinus, the Stoics’ infirm grasp of the complete integrated causal explanatory framework does *not* permit them even to get natural efficient causality right. For efficient causes in nature are the actualization of potency (II 5. 1, 17–20). And potencies (real, but not actual) in nature are functionally related to form. So, even when the Stoics correctly identify an efficient cause, they do not understand its nature.

### Epistemology

Plotinus’s rejection of Stoic epistemology is entailed by his rejection of Stoic materialism. We shall need to take a slightly convoluted path to see why this is so. This path begins with the reasons why Academic Skeptics attacked Stoic epistemology.<sup>8</sup> The Old Stoa argued that the “graspable presentation” (*katalēptikē phantasia*) is the criterion of truth (Diog. Laert. 7.54 = *SVF* 2.105). A presentation is a state of the soul revealing both itself and its cause. Presentations are acquired either through sense perception or by thought alone when the object is an incorporeal or a non-evident corporeal body such as god (Diog. Laert. 7.49 = *SVF* 2.52). As Sextus Empiricus reports, presentations may be either true or false, the latter the basis for a false assertion, such as in cases of optical illusions (Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 7.244 = *SVF* 2.65). A graspable presentation is the criterion of truth, not of knowledge, for whereas knowledge is available only to the wise, graspable presentations are available to any rational creature.

Arcesilaus, head of the Academy in the middle of the third century BCE, argued that a graspable presentation is supposed to produce assent to a proposition. But no proposition entails its own truth, that is, no propositions guarantees that the world is as the proposition represents it. It may be replied on the Stoics’ behalf that, after all, there are no guarantees in life, which are in any case not necessary for knowledge. Why could we not insist that even the sage, sole possessor of knowledge, may be mistaken? To put the matter in a slightly different way, why should we accept that knowledge must be infallible?

Given the apparent problems with insisting on infallibility, one might be surprised to discover the Stoics’ unwavering acceptance of the infallibility of knowledge. Knowledge for the Stoics, our sources tell us, is “sure and stable grasping *unalterable by reasoning*” (cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 7.151–2; Stob. 2.73,19 WH = *SVF* 1.68–9). The view that knowledge is infallible was shared by Plato and Aristotle. It is also endorsed by Plotinus and all of his successors. To see what is at stake here, it should be added that Sextus Empiricus, chronicler of skepticism and adamant opponent of all forms of dogmatism, agrees that knowledge, if it exists, must be infallible. The reason for this near universal agreement is that to allow the possibility of fallible knowledge is to conflate knowledge and belief. For if a claim to



knowledge is defeasible, then that claim does not differ from a belief which may happen to be true, but then again, may turn out to be false. As Plato argued in *Theaetetus*, knowledge cannot be true belief (187a–201c; cf. *Timaeus* 51d3–e6). The reason for this is that a true belief may be adventitiously true, say, a lucky guess. No one in antiquity thought there was no difference between a lucky guess and the knowledge that is wisdom, the ardently sought and presumably precious goal of philosophy. But what differentiates true belief from knowledge? Presumably, it is evidence or sufficient evidence or adequate evidence, in short, some sort of *logos* in virtue of which one can claim to know. The problem with this, as the skeptics realized with crystal clarity, is that the putative evidence rarely if ever guarantees what it is supposedly evidence for.<sup>9</sup> But what, then, gives non-entailing evidence its evidential character? Indeed, if the supposed evidence does not guarantee what it is evidence for, then, once again, what is the difference between a belief that is based on bad or no evidence and knowledge based on non-entailing evidence? The skeptics – above all Sextus Empiricus – focused on the vulnerability of the claim that one could have non-entailing evidence. If this is a chimera, then in fact there is no difference between knowledge and a random belief, in which case, one ought to suspend judgment or withhold assent to any proposition since there is no more reason to believe it than its contradictory.

Finally, we return to Plotinus. If knowledge is not infallible, then there is no difference between knowledge and irrational belief, which is to say that there is no such thing as knowledge. This is of course unacceptable to a Platonist such as Plotinus. But for our purposes, the principal point is that the Stoics, owing to their materialism, and despite their wish to endorse the infallibility of knowledge, are completely unequipped to meet the skeptical challenge. As Plotinus puts it, for the Stoics the putative evidence for their knowledge claims must consist in “impressions” (*τυποι*) on the soul (V 5. 1, 24–5; cf. V 9. 5, 22–3; Diog. Laert. 7.45). These are, of course, physical events. Plotinus asks of the Stoics the same question that the skeptics do: “how will the soul know that it has really grasped what the impression is an impression of” (V 5. 1, 28–9). In other words, the real criterion is not the presentation or the proposition supposedly representing the truth, but the truth itself. What guarantees that such-and-such is the case is just this, not a representation of it. So, if knowledge must be infallible, knowledge must be non-representational. But though a body might be able to be in a non-representational state regarding its own bodily states (“I know I have a headache”), there is simply no way that a body can be in a non-representational state regarding that which is external to it.<sup>10</sup> Yet all the things that Stoics and Platonists want to know are external to our bodies.

Plotinus perhaps appreciated the irony that the arch-dogmatists, the Stoics, were least able to defend the possibility of knowledge because it was acknowledged by all sides that knowledge must be infallible and materialism cannot explain how this is possible. The sense in which the intellect must be immaterial cannot be accommodated by making it into a Stoic incorporeal or by making it a corporeal property of a body. The intellect must be an incorporeal entity because in thinking, (a) the subject must have the intelligible object in it and (b) the subject must be aware of the presence of that object (see V 3. 13, 13–15, V 6. 1). The subject in (a) must be identical with the subject in (b); otherwise, a vicious infinite regress would threaten. That is, if these subjects were different, then the intelligible object present in the first would also either have to be present in the second or else a representation of it would have to be there. The former obviously solves no problem that is not solved by the identity of the first and the second. In the latter case, the skeptical argument looms with the possibility of misrepresentation. And in any case, there could then be no criterion showing us how to tell the difference between an accurate and an inaccurate representation.<sup>11</sup> The only

way that the subject that is qualified by an intelligible object and the subject that is aware of this qualification can be identical is if the subject is immaterial. By contrast, if the subject so qualified were a body, then there would have to be another subject – presumably, another body – that had the additional property of being aware of the qualification of the first. So, thinking “in the primary sense,” as Plotinus puts it, must be self-reflexive and immaterial. This is not to say, of course, that thinking cannot occur in souls that have bodies as a necessary condition for thinking, that is, *our* bodies. In this case, the self-reflexivity is imperfect or qualified, and fallibility is actually ineliminable.<sup>12</sup>

### Free will, determinism, and moral responsibility

The Stoics’ principled materialism and mechanism left them incapable of giving a satisfactory account of knowledge despite their appreciation of the fact that knowledge must be infallible. Similarly, their adherence to these principles also left them incapable of giving a satisfactory account of moral responsibility despite their ardent desire to integrate this idea into their own philosophy. Plotinus says that if the Stoics are right about the universal causal chain, then “what is up to us” (*to eph’ hēmin*) will be just words (III 1. 7, 13–24). Plotinus adds that even if we act on our impulses (*hormai*), these will themselves result from pre-existing causes. Plotinus here seems implicitly to acknowledge that the Stoics distinguish between antecedent causes, which are only proximate and “perfect and principal” causes which include the impulse of the agent (cf. Cicero, *Fat.* 39–41 = *SVF* 2.975). Plotinus contends, along with many other critics of Stoicism, that these latter have themselves pre-existing causes, in which case nothing is truly up to us.<sup>13</sup> Evidently, Stoics maintained that moral responsibility was not pre-empted by universal causal determinism; indeed, although the scope of what is “up to us” is certainly more limited than most people innocently suppose, still there is a core of rational capacity in us that gives meaning to our claims that some actions are praiseworthy and some are blameworthy. This core is the “assent” (*sunkatathesis*) to impressions that precedes our (rational) impulses to act. This assent is, of course, itself caused. So, the question for Plotinus is why he thinks that something more than assent is necessary for things being “up to us.”

The deceptively easy answer to this question is that assent that is causally determined is not real assent, because in such a case, the agent could not have done otherwise. But the ability to do other than what one in fact does is precisely where moral responsibility lies. This answer, which is perhaps of Peripatetic provenance, is not exactly the one Plotinus endorses. He readily recognizes that when we are moved by “opposing contingencies” (*tais enantiais tuchais*), “compulsions” (*anagkai*), and “strong passions” (*pathôn ischuurais*) what we do is “enslaved” and so not “up to us” (VI 8. 1, 23–4; see also VI 8. 2, 21–3). Just as any mode of cognition that is embodied is only an inferior version of the paradigm of thinking, so any embodied desire, that is, any desire for the satisfaction of a bodily need, is only qualifiedly “up to us.” In fact, one of Plotinus’s crucial moves in this entire debate is to insist on *degrees* of moral responsibility (see VI 8. 2, 35–7). Bad people do indeed not do what is up to them (VI 8. 3.17–19). Such people are, as Plotinus understands the Stoics, in the exact position that they say everyone is in. What, then, is the paradigm of that which is “up to us”?

Plotinus’s answer is that we should locate “being up to us” in our will (*boulēsis*) for the Good (VI 8. 6, 41–3). Our will for the Good itself and for any instantiation of it is unqualifiedly up to us because in willing the good we free ourselves of all embodied “compulsions,” all antecedent causes of willing. This is so because our undescended intellects are eternally willing the Good and achieving it by contemplating all that is intelligible. Our embodied willing of the Good is a sort of transformation or identification of ourselves with

that intellect (see II 3. 9, 30–1, I 4. 4, 12–15). Insofar as will is “authoritative” (*kurios*) in us, we are free (VI 8. 6, 27–9). Our moral responsibility resides precisely in the unconstrained will, unconstrained by the Stoic antecedent causes because it belongs to an immaterial intellect.

Let us try to get a better feel for how this is supposed to work concretely. All of our impulses or desires to embodied action are, Plotinus concedes, contingent upon the exigencies of embodiment, which are – Plotinus does not put it quite this way – certainly not exempt from the laws of nature. In addition, as the Stoics maintain, our desires, including our “low” appetites, are rational just in the sense that they originate in a rational soul.<sup>14</sup> But where Plotinus rejects the Stoic analysis and so the conclusion of universal causal necessity it is because the reason implicated in our rational desires is manifestly not the only sort of reason we possess. Consider the phenomenon of incontinence or *akrasia*. There is rationality in the recognition of the appetite and the impulse or desire to satisfy it. But there is also rationality of a different sort in the endorsement or rejection of this appetite. This “second-order” rationality is distinct from the first-order rationality of appetitive desire and makes possible the existence of that which the Stoics deny, namely, *akrasia*. It is in this second-order rationality that will resides, as in: “I will that my appetite not be satisfied.” The only explanation for this conflict is that we judge that what appears to us as good is not really so. And since we all want only what is really good for ourselves, we resist – whether successfully or not does not now matter – the satisfaction of the appetite.

The second-order rationality or rational willing could not be constrained by Stoic antecedent causes for the simple reason that *boulêsis* is hard-wired to the Good.<sup>15</sup> No one desires the real Good because of their upbringing or bodily constitution or because of fate. But the embodied self is divided. It includes the subject of first-order rational desires as well as second-order ones. So, in opposing the appetites or in critically evaluating their claims on us, whether we endorse them or reject them is “up to us.” Since Plotinus follows Plato in holding that all wrongdoing is done out of ignorance, we should designate the ignorance of the malefactor as culpable.<sup>16</sup> Wherein lies the culpability and hence the moral responsibility? I think the short answer to this question is that wrongdoers are ignorant of their true identity as intellects.<sup>17</sup> They are culpable for this ignorance because in all their wrongdoing they must necessarily acknowledge the authority of reason in themselves. In every act of practical reasoning, they appeal to universal propositions (whether true or false) on the basis of which they act in behalf of achieving the good for themselves. But to recognize that authority even in saying, “the rule I follow is never give a sucker an even break,” one acknowledges that one’s own good is determined by reason, not by appetite.<sup>18</sup>

In developing his critique of Stoic compatibilism, there is an intriguing connection with the Roman Stoic Epictetus (c.50–130 CE). It is fairly certain that Plotinus knew of Epictetus’s works and it is perhaps the case that Plotinus’s regard for him is the basis for, among other things, Simplicius writing an extensive commentary on his *Enchiridion*.<sup>19</sup> In any case, there is a striking resemblance between the way that Epictetus and Plotinus conceive of moral responsibility. Epictetus takes the phrase “up to us” to indicate only those things that are unqualifiedly in our power (*Diss.* 4.1.68–73). This includes anything that could be an antecedent cause of an alteration in us. Thus, apparently the notion of the Old Stoa that even our acts of assent are fated, that is, antecedently caused, is rejected or at least de-emphasized. So, the only thing that really depends on us is our assent to impressions and to subsequent beliefs and impulses (*Diss.* 1.1.12, seq.).<sup>20</sup> And the only thing to which the wise person assents is the rule of reason in himself and in the universe, which is in fact the same thing. As he succinctly puts it, “if you want it, you are free” (*Diss.* 1.17.29).<sup>21</sup>

I find it plausible that, especially in *Ennead* VI 8, Plotinus is allying himself with Epictetus's analysis of moral responsibility and freedom. I suspect he finds this easy to do because that analysis is nowhere presented as based on principles outside of the confines of ethics. If it were, as it is for the Old Stoa, presented within the framework of universal causal determinism as a function of materialism and mechanism, Plotinus would presumably have been less conciliating. The question for him is whether moral responsibility could consistently be maintained by one who is committed to Stoic principles. For Epictetus, our moral orientation (*proairesis*) is, for the Stoics generally, the disposition of the leading part of our soul (*hêgemonikon*), which is itself a body (*SVF* 1.518; 2.790).<sup>22</sup> For Plotinus, this moral orientation depends on psychic or intellectual activity as being radically distinct from any other sort of motion. Autonomous acts of will cannot be subordinated to a universal causal nexus. And, as we saw above, a universal causal nexus makes *akrasia* impossible.<sup>23</sup> Epictetus was, famously, a connoisseur of the examination of conscience when all one's impulses would be scrutinized. But this examination could only be, within a Stoic framework, one part of the "brain" monitoring another part, just as one part of a thermostat monitors another before opening or closing a valve. Epictetus has the psychology right, but assuming he is an orthodox Stoic, he has the metaphysics all wrong. For the examination of conscience must be treated like the examination of one's own external bodily constitution. But for Plotinus, the decision to resist an appetite is not like the decision to stay an unsteady hand. For Epictetus, the appetitive impulse that is tamed by reason's refusal to assent to it is no less an effect than is the refusal to assent itself. By contrast, Plotinus wants to insist on the immateriality of the intellect. Its autonomy in relation to material causes is manifest in every act of assent, positive or negative. We are ideally identified with that intellect; our embodied selves are images of that just as any image of its paradigm in the intelligible world manifests imperfectly that paradigm.

## Happiness

Plotinus's late treatise "On Happiness" (I 4) is an effort to situate Platonic ethics in relation to its main rivals, Peripatetic, Stoic, and Epicurean. In fact, as Plotinus well knew, the similarities in the views of the major philosophical schools far outweighed the differences. For one thing, all agreed that philosophy was essential to human happiness, both as a way of living and as the repository of substantive teaching. The way of life recommended by a Stoic and by a Platonist could not have differed all that much. The adjectives "serious-minded," "sober," "upright," "honest," and so on, are easily verified in the doxographies which provide glimpses both into the lives of the famous philosophers and into the most common perceptions about those lives by others. As we have seen in the previous section, Plotinus's quarrel with Stoicism rests on his argument that Stoic materialism and mechanism cannot provide a solid foundation for their otherwise admirable psychological and ethical views.

The discussion of the Stoic view of happiness (*eudaimonia*) begins with the question: "Those [i.e., Stoics] who say that happiness is found in the rational life [*logikêi zôêi*], not merely in life, even if the life includes sense perception, may well be right. But it is appropriate to ask them why they locate happiness only in rational living" (I 4. 2, 31–4). Plotinus's point in posing this question is the following dilemma. Either the Stoics will identify happiness with rational living because rationality is necessary for attaining "primary natural needs" (*ta prôta kata phusin*) or not. If they do, then even irrational creatures who are, despite their lack of reason, adept at acquiring their primary natural needs, will be happy. But if the Stoics deny that animals are happy, which they certainly will want to do, then they will have to explain the function or role of reason in the happy life. It is Plotinus' contention that the Stoics do

not have the correct principles that will enable them to explain why the happy life is the rational life.

Plotinus raises another problem for their view. By locating happiness in the rational life, and yet by denying that things which are not rational are happy, they seem to be forced to admit that the rationality they seek is not to be considered “adjectivally” so to speak, but substantively (I 4. 3, 9–15). Rationality viewed as a property or differentia of a species of life with a universal genus must be logically subordinate to the species itself. Hence the claim that the Stoics can only really say that it is instrumental rationality that makes a life happy. But then the instrument is *only* an instrument and if the goal is achieved otherwise, then the instrument is not necessary, as in the case of animals. But if rational life is not considered as a species differentiated from other species in this way, how is its superiority to be conceived? Plotinus is now going to argue that happiness is rational living where “rational living” refers to the paradigm of living, the life of intellect (I 4. 3, 16–40).<sup>24</sup> As he will go on to argue in later chapters of this treatise and elsewhere, the lives of embodied persons are happy to the extent that they identify with their intellects.<sup>25</sup> The present point of contention is whether – granting that Stoic rational living could not be perfect happiness, because of its materialism – will it amount to perfect happiness in a secondary sense or as perfect as possible for embodied creatures?

In the next chapter, Plotinus wants to argue that the perfect life is available for human beings. His two central claims are (1) that the happy human being is one who has “transformed himself into an identity with his intellect” (I 4. 4, 14–15; see also V 3. 4, 29–31) and (2) that this transformation, like an opposite transformation into an identity with the body, is accomplished by an act of will (*kata boulêsin*).<sup>26</sup> The unequivocally happy person is one who has willed to identify with his intellect. The identification is a metaphor, but it is not merely that, because for Plotinus the entire sensible world is a metaphor for true reality. One identifies with one’s intellect analogous to the way that one might identify with a cause or even with another person. The identification is accomplished by an act of will which, as we have already seen, is permanently and unalterably oriented to the Good. The connections being asserted here can be made a bit more precise. The Good is virtually all of the Forms. An intellect attains the Good in the only way possible for an intellect, by becoming cognitively identical with all the Forms. The will of everyone with an intellect is potentially identical with that intellect; the actualization of this potentiality is the transformation being discussed. The act of will is the transformation (*metabasis*) from potentiality to actuality. It is also by an act of will that one identifies with the body, which really means identifying oneself as the subject of bodily appetites and hence as designating one’s own good as achieved by satisfying these appetites. One is, of course, the subject of these appetites so long as one is embodied. But one need not – and the happy person does not – accept this identification, in the sense that he does not think that the real good that he permanently wants is attained by willing that identification. He treats his body, including the subject of the bodily desires, exactly as a possession (I 4. 4, 25–8). His happiness is, therefore, unperturbed by misfortunes that befall his body. Even the death of friends and family do not grieve him. Only that possession which is itself “without intellect” (*noun ouk echon*) is grieved.

The imperviousness to bodily misfortune cannot but bring to mind the Stoic teaching. Epictetus certainly includes these among the things that are not “up to us” and so should be of no concern (*Diss.* 1.28.14, 26). Plotinus shares the conclusion, but believes the Stoics do not have the resources to explain why this is so. Crudely put, the Stoic can hardly disassociate himself from the bodily since that is all he is. Why, though, can he not insist that it is possible to disassociate himself from everything other than the leading part of his soul, the *hêgemonikon*?

The answer to this question is that since, for the Stoics, the soul is corporeal, disassociation from the rest of the body, were that possible, would be disassociation from another part, that is, a part other than itself (cf. *Enn.* IV 7. 2, 1–14). But that would be to treat the subject of, say, sense perception, as other than the subject that is the leading part of the soul. This “otherness” is, for Plotinus, of the unacceptable sort; for it is not the otherness of an image in relation to its paradigm.

The point comes out rather more clearly in Plotinus’s sustained attack against the Stoic doctrine of “total mixture” (*krasis di’ holôn*).<sup>27</sup> Plotinus took this doctrine to be in direct opposition to the Platonic doctrine that the body is an instrument of the soul, which is the self (IV 7. 1, 24–5), and therefore unmixed with it or at least differentiated from it in kind (I 1. 1, 3; II 3. 15, 24–8; VI 7. 4, 9–10; cf. Plato, *Alc.* I, 129e–130a). But Plotinus also wants to maintain that in fact the body is in a way contained within the soul, as soul is in intellect and intellect in the One (III 9. 3, 1–4; V 5. 9, 29–33; cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 36e). This means that the soul is present throughout the body as subject of the body’s instrumental activity. Plotinus has a homey example to differentiate his view of the soul-body relation from that of the Stoics. The Stoics are obliged to say that a pain, say, in the toe, is different from a perception of the pain, which is in the leading part of the soul (*Enn.* IV 7. 7; cf. *SVF* 2.854). But in this case, the pain that is perceived is not actually in the toe but in the region of the leading part to which the original pain was transmitted. So, on the Stoic doctrine it is not really possible for one to perceive that one has a pain in the toe so long as the toe is a part of the body different from the leading part. Plotinus takes this to be a *reductio* proof. The pain and the perception of the pain must be in the identical thing (IV 7. 7, 26–8). Crucially, though, this does not mean that the pain and the perception of pain are identical. Because the soul is immaterial and the body is contained within it, it is capable of being the subject of the pain and at the same time the subject of the awareness of the pain. The former is the intentional object of the latter. A parallel argument is applied to thinking and a *reductio* argument is constructed to show that thinking of universal properties cannot be a bodily process (IV 4. 8, 8).

So, Plotinus’s claim is that if the leading part of the soul is disassociated from the rest of the parts of the human being, then in order to do this the materialist must get the phenomenology all wrong regarding sense perception and thinking. Accordingly, Stoic “absence of feeling” (*apatheia*) as an ethical goal is something they are not really entitled to embrace. This is why their interpretation of the anodyne “living in agreement with nature” as “living rationally” must fall prey to the dilemma that this rationality is either instrumental or, if it is non-instrumental, and so free from bodily concern, cannot be sustained within a Stoic materialist context.

## Conclusion

By the last quarter of the third century CE, Stoicism had been a spent force for quite some time. There are no known Stoic philosophers from this period. Plotinus’s criticisms are not addressed to any contemporary opponents. They are anchored in the systematic Platonic metaphysical framework Plotinus constructed. On the basis of this framework, Plotinus was in a position to target a variety of historical anti-Platonic positions. The central weakness in Stoicism, according to Plotinus, is its uncompromising materialism and the consequently crippled account of causality. The Stoics were, for him, basically right on a number of important issues, including their insistence on the infallibility of knowledge and on the sufficiency of virtue for happiness. Plotinus’s fundamental complaint, though, is that the Stoics do not have the correct principles with which to justify these claims. They could achieve

consistency were they to eschew infallibilism and embrace some relativistic moral code. But this would only be compounding error. Plotinus's successors seem to treat Stoicism as one of those "ancient" schools whose deviations from the truth were adequately exposed by Plotinus, whom Proclus called "the great exegete of the Platonic revelation." Nevertheless, perhaps already by the time of Iamblichus, and certainly by the time of Simplicius, the moral rectitude of Epictetus led Platonists actually to give his *Handbook* an honored place in an introduction to the study of Platonism. Simplicius, often quoting from Porphyry, is an important source for our knowledge of Stoicism and, indeed, for much additional material in antiquity now lost. We should not suppose that Simplicius was unmindful of the absence of a sound metaphysical grounding for Epictetus's ethical claims. At the beginning of his commentary (Hadot 1996: 194), he evinces surprise that such a morally uplifting work can be written without the foundational belief in the immortality of the soul. And in his account of Epictetus on free will and moral responsibility, he follows Plotinus' criticisms of Stoicism generally. Yet, what was perhaps paramount in the minds of the later Platonists was that philosophy was above all else a way of life, a *bios*. And the exemplary life apparently led by Epictetus was a better advertisement for Platonism than any arid technical treatise.

## Notes

- 1 See Rist (1967: 174) on the "generic" nature of the Stoicism under attack by Plotinus.
- 2 Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 10.218 (*S/F* 2.331) suggests the periphrasis "obtain" (*huparchein*).
- 3 See Plato, *Soph.* 246a–248a, where Plato argues that a survey of existents does not answer the question of what being is. He criticizes materialists who, while conceding that souls exist, want to deny that properties of soul such as justice and wisdom also exist because whereas the former can be supposed to be a body the latter cannot. Cf. *Enn.* III 6. 6, 33–8.
- 4 Aristotle, *Metaph.* 6.1, 1026a27–32, says that theology is first philosophy. This is so precisely because the subject of theology has ontological primacy and in its causal connection to everything else it can provide the requisite universality for the sought-for science.
- 5 See *Enn.* III 8. 2, 3–6; IV 4. 32, 13–22; V 9. 6, 21–4; VI 4. 16, 19–20; VI 5. 8, 18–20, all of which concern the causal relation between nature, the lowest part of the immaterial soul, and sensible bodies. The general point is that bodies cannot be causally sufficient for the motions or changes in bodies.
- 6 See Bobzien (1998: 48, 53–6) who, citing the various passages in which the Old Stoa pronounce on fate, argues that Stoic mechanism and teleology are not incompatible.
- 7 See *Enn.* VI 7. 27 where Plotinus criticizes the Stoic notion of "congeniality" (*oikeiōsis*) on the grounds that something is not good for us because we desire it; rather, we desire it because it is good.
- 8 See Gerson (2009: 116–24) for an extended discussion of Arcesilaus' attack on Stoic epistemology.
- 9 The famous *tropes* of Sextus are intended to show this in detail. See *Pyr.* 1.32–3; 36–8.
- 10 In *Enn.* II 6. 1–5, Plotinus argues for the impassibility of the whole rational soul, meaning that the soul cannot be affected or altered as can a body. Again, his primary target is Stoic materialism which must take all psychic activity as involving corporeal alterations. The principal reason for maintaining the impossibility of the soul being both corporeal and rational is that rational activities such as judgments operate on corporeal affections; they cannot be such themselves, on pain of an infinite regress.
- 11 The answer to the skeptic's challenge is the theme of V 5. 1–2. See Porphyry, *Sententiae* (*Sent.*) 43, 27–42, who summarizes the Plotinian account as a refutation of the Stoics' materialistic account of cognition. This work is a pastiche of passages from the *Enneads* interspersed with commentary by Porphyry.
- 12 Plotinus' successors continued to develop this argument long after the threat of Stoic materialism had waned. See, e.g., Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, props. 15–17. Aristotle's unqualified agreement with Plato on the immateriality of the intellect was frequently remarked on and at least one of the reasons for the widely held view that Aristotle's philosophy was in harmony with Plato's.
- 13 See Bobzien 1998: ch. 6 for a helpful discussion of the so-called compatibilism of Chrysippus.
- 14 Cf. Stob. 2,87,3–5 WH, on the rationality of impulse or "motion of thought" (*phora dianoias*) in Stoicism, and Plotinus, *Enn.* IV 8. 5, 8–10, on "personal motion" (*phorai oikeiai*), which is involuntary when we move in the direction of the bad. We are nevertheless morally responsible for this.

- 15 Indeed, at III 8. 1 Plotinus argues that in a way *all* things “contemplate” (*theôrein*), where contemplation means contact with the Good insofar as something is capable of doing this according to its nature.
- 16 See Plato *Ap.* 37a5; *Grg.* 488a3; *Prt.* 345d8, 358c7; *Resp.* 589c6; *Ti.* 86d2, e1; *Leg.* 731c–d for the claim, held to unwaveringly by Plato, that *oudeis hekôn hamartanei* (“no one errs willingly”). This principle is not understood by Plato or Plotinus to undercut moral responsibility.
- 17 Cf. Porphyry, *Sent.* 30, 14–16; 40, 59–68, who explicitly links the moral responsibility with self-ignorance.
- 18 Cf. Plato, *Leg.* 731e4–732a4, where Plato identifies the cause of all errors (*hamartēmata*) as excessive “self-love” (*philia heautou*). The lover, Plato says, is blinded by the beloved, and thinking that he should valorize himself before the truth, he misjudges what is good and bad and right and wrong. This idea of valorizing (*timan*) is taken up by Plotinus at V 1. 1, 1–17 where he says that embodied persons “fail to valorize themselves,” meaning their true selves.
- 19 See Graeser 1972: 82–4, for an incomplete list of parallels between the *Enneads* and the writings of Epictetus.
- 20 Epictetus’s use of the terms “autonomous” (*autoexousios*) and “free” (*eleutherios*) to indicate what is up to us is echoed in the *Enneads* VI 8.
- 21 Epictetus uses the word “wanting” (*thelêsis*) here, as does Plotinus. See note above.
- 22 LS (320) usefully compare the *hégemonikon* to the brain and its parts; the five senses plus speech and the generative capacity, to the nervous system.
- 23 There is very little evidence of the Old Stoa’s reaction to the possibility of *akrasia* as found in Plato and Aristotle. But we do have a good deal of evidence for their monistic psychology, according to which all our actions are based on all-things-considered judgments. Thus, no one could act counter to what he judges to be the best thing to do. See *SVF* 2.823; 3.459. Typically, the monistic psychology was encapsulated in the claim that there is one *dunamis* of action and emotion.
- 24 Cf. Aristotle, *Metaph.* 12.7, 1072b26–8, where he identifies the life of the Unmoved Mover, a life of pure intellectual activity, as “the best life” (*zôê aristê*).
- 25 At V 9. 1, 10–16, Plotinus criticizes Stoics (and Epicureans) for emphasizing virtuous *actions* (*praxeis*) and choices of goods in the sensible world. Cf. *SVF* 3.23, 64, 118 and Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 11.133. This may not seem like an altogether fair criticism of the Stoics, who seem, above all, to emphasize the state of one’s will and not one’s circumstances, achievements, or actions. Plotinus’ point, however, is that their materialism (“they are unable to see what is above”) prevents them from directing their interior lives to something higher, despite their indifference to the goods of an embodied life. See Gurtler 1988: 228–35.
- 26 Cf. Porphyry, *Sent.* 26.5–7; 32.44–47.
- 27 For the Stoic doctrine, see *SVF* 1.102; 2.467, 471, 473.

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## 4

# AUGUSTINE'S DEBT TO STOICISM IN THE *CONFESSIONS*

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Seneca asserts in *Letter* 121 (14–16) that we mature by exercising self-care as we pass through successive psychosomatic “constitutions.” These are babyhood (*infantia*), childhood (*pueritia*), adolescence (*adulescentia*), and young adulthood (*iuventus*).<sup>1</sup> Augustine, of course, divides the narrative of his own development into these stages in the *Confessions*,<sup>2</sup> a text wherein he claims familiarity with more than a few works of Seneca (*Conf.* 5.6.11). This raises the question: Does Augustine use the renowned Stoic theory of “affiliation” (*oikeiôsis*, *conciliatio*), upon which Seneca’s account of maturation depends, as a motif in his own philosophical autobiography? If he does, that will update our understanding of the *Confessions* as a work in the history of philosophy. Traditionally, interpretations of this work have tended to see it as containing exclusively Neoplatonic or uniquely Christian thought.<sup>3</sup>

Self-affiliation is the linchpin of the Stoic ethical system, which defines living well as living in harmony with nature, posits that altruism develops from self-interest, and allows that pleasure and pain are indicators of well-being while denying that happiness consists in pleasure and that pain is misery (Diog. Laert. 7.85–9). Humans are rational social animals, according to Stoic psychology, and like all animals, they have an affinity to their own natural constitution, spontaneously seeking out what serves their well-being and avoiding what harms them. Pleasure and pain are by-products of these healthy and unhealthy conditions. As humans mature, their self-regard naturally extends to others who are like themselves. Initially, immediate family comes under the scope of the individual’s care, but with the development of human conceptual ability one can recognize the appropriateness of concern for all human beings. Rationality also allows for a transition from unreflectively acting on natural impulses, to the enlightened performance of natural actions as “proper functions” and as “right actions.”

Augustine had access to Stoic accounts of self-affiliation not only in Seneca’s *Letter* 121, but also in Cicero’s *On Goals*,<sup>4</sup> and in non-extant sources of Stoic ethical theory.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he endorsed the notion of self-affiliation outside of the *Confessions*. In the *Against Faustus*, a work contemporaneous with his autobiography, we find him asserting that all animals – including humans, which are rational mortal animals – nourish and cherish their own flesh, since an animal is affiliated to itself in order that it might take care of its well-being (*ad incolunitatem tuendam conciliatum*).<sup>6</sup> Humans and other animals naturally seek their own health, and fear death and whatever can tear apart their constitution (*membrorum conpago, iunctura*).<sup>7</sup> More than twenty years later, Augustine was still affirming that every animal has been

affiliated to itself by nature (*sibi natura conciliatum*) so that it might take care of itself (*ut se custodiat*).<sup>8</sup> The question, then, is whether he also makes the notion of self-affiliation thematic in his philosophical autobiography.

I shall argue that Augustine does indeed present himself and some of his primary relationships – with his mother and his long-term girlfriend – in terms of personal and social *oikeiōsis*. In addition, his self-critiques in the early books of the *Confessions* can be more fully understood if compared to Stoic developmental theory. He depicts himself as failing to progress intellectually, socially, and morally: although he passed through the successive constitutions, becoming physically larger and cognitively capable, he did not mature correctly by the standards of his Stoic sources.

### Self-affiliation

In the final paragraph of Book 1 of the *Confessions* (1.20.31), Augustine summarizes the basic orientations that guided his behavior during his prepubescent years:

At that time, I ... took care for [1] my health ... I took care of [2] the wholeness of my senses by means of an interior sense, and even in my little thoughts about little matters I took delight in [3] the truth. I did not want to be in error, I developed a good memory, acquired the armory of being skilled with words, friendship softened me, I fled from [4] pain, despondency, ignorance.<sup>9</sup>

Given that Augustine presents this as a recapitulation of his babyhood and childhood together, he presumably wants us to understand that some of these behaviors and desires were manifested from infancy, while others emerged later. Basic self-preservative activities such as sucking were undertaken from birth (*Conf.* 1.6.7), while “not wanting to be in error” would only be possible at a subsequent stage of childhood development.

Philosophically, the first thing to note about this passage is that it is not a description of what Augustine thinks was wrong with him. He is not, for instance, accusing himself of selfishness when he says that he took care for his own well-being. For he says that all these orientations were good, and implanted by God (*Conf.* 1.20.31, cf. 1.7.12). He is telling us that he was a typical human child. And the standard of what counts as “typical” is evidently the account of humans as rational social animals that had been given by the Stoics. For this self-description echoes texts of Seneca and Cicero on self-affiliation theory (including even the claim that the impulses are God-given<sup>10</sup>). If we consider the objects that Augustine says he pursued or avoided, which I have numbered in the passage for ease of reference, we will see that this is the case.

Augustine foregrounds his self-description with the claim that he took care for (1) his health (*meam incolumitatem*). His use of the term *incolumitas* signals that he aligns himself with the Stoic “cradle argument.”<sup>11</sup> This word is distinctive of *On Goals* 5.7.18, where Cicero reports Carneades’s summary of the Stoic position, contrasting it with that of Aristippus and Hieronymus of Rhodes:

Some [e.g. Aristippus] suppose that the primary impulse is for pleasure and the primary repulsion is from pain; others [e.g. Hieronymus] consider that freedom from pain is the first thing appropriated and pain the first thing avoided; others [i.e. the Stoics] set out from what they call the primary things in accordance with nature,

among which they count the sound condition [*incolumitas*] and preservation of all one's parts ...

(Trans. LS 64G)

That Augustine sides with the Stoics here is significant in the context of the *Confessions*. By his own admission, as a young man in Milan he was inclined to accept Epicurus's claim that the natural goal is pleasure, but he rejected Epicurus's position on life after death (*Conf.* 6.16.26). Here he shows that by the time he wrote the *Confessions* he had come to believe that Stoic philosophical psychology was more convincing than hedonistic anthropology. Another sign that Augustine is relying on Stoic sources here is his assertion that he "took care" (*curae habebam*) for his well-being, a literal echo of Seneca's *Letter* 121.17:

First of all, the animal itself is affiliated to itself [*sibi conciliatur*], for there must be something to which all other things [that it seeks and avoids] are referred. I seek pleasure;<sup>12</sup> for whom? For myself. I am therefore taking care of myself [*mei curam ago*]. I flee from pain;<sup>13</sup> on behalf of whom? Myself. Therefore, I am taking care of myself. Since I gauge all my actions with reference to my own welfare [*curam mei*], the care of myself is before all else. This [self-care] is present in all animals, and it is not brought in from the outside [by conditioning] but is inborn.

(Trans. Gummere 1925)

Augustine next reports that (2) "I took care of the wholeness of my senses [*integritatem sensuum meorum*]" (cf. *De doct. Christ.* 1.24.25). "Wholeness" of sense organs is mentioned as a natural desideratum in Cicero's Stoic doxography, where it is listed among the preferred indifferents (*Fin.* 3.51, 56; cf. Diog. Laert. 7.109).

Here Augustine adds a stipulation about the perceptual basis of the care he exercised over his senses: "I took care of the wholeness of my senses by means of an interior sense [*interiore sensu*]." This "interior sense" is a power of self-perception that serves self-preservation, and so it, too, has a Stoic patrimony. As we learn from *On Free Choice* (completed around the time he began the *Confessions*), by the "interior sense" Augustine means a power found in humans and non-rational animals that provides awareness of oneself, and consequently enables one to seek and avoid beneficial or harmful things (*De lib. arb.* 2.3.8, 2.4.10). Augustine's language and reasoning in *On Free Choice* are quite close to Seneca's in *Letter* 121. The latter says that every animal "feels that it is a living thing," and therefore flees from threats to its life (*Ep.* 121.11–12; cf. 121.21), while Augustine argues that "every living thing flees from death. Since death is the opposite of life, it must be the case that life perceives itself, because it flees from its opposite" (*De lib. arb.* 2.4.10, trans. Williams 1993). Here in the *Confessions* we again find Augustine attributing the ability to keep himself safe and sound to the interior sense. The reason why Augustine says that the interior sense allowed him to preserve his senses in particular, is that according to Stoic authors reflexive awareness includes not only a sense of oneself as a whole (*sensus sui*) or of one's constitution,<sup>14</sup> but also of one's parts (limbs and senses), and of how these are to be used for survival (Seneca, *Ep.* 121.5–9; Hierocles, *Elementa Ethica* [*El. Eth.*] 1.51–2.5). In addition to the overall self-awareness comparable to what we today call proprioception and interoception, humans and other animals experience limb ownership and sense reflexivity. All these internal perceptions allow for spontaneous voluntary actions aimed at self-care, with the limbs and senses being employed efficiently. Augustine similarly says that from earliest infancy he knew how to use his mouth for eating (*sugere noram*, *Conf.* 1.6.7), and argues that animals would not be able to pursue or avoid anything

unless they had reflexive awareness of their senses provided by the interior sense (*De lib. arb.* 2.4.10). He describes the emergence of a kind of proprioception – a sense of “where he was,”<sup>15</sup> – associating this with his attempts to secure food from adults (*Conf.* 1.6.8). In *Confessions* 1.20.31, then, Augustine’s reference to an “interior sense” by which he sought to preserve his sense organs signals that he is inheriting and endorsing a Stoic account of non-rational/pre-rational self-perception as the ground of self-affiliation.<sup>16</sup>

Coming to (3) “truth,” we note that Augustine describes his youthful self as “delighting in the truth [*veritate delectabar*],” avoiding ignorance, and “not wanting to be in error.” Here he closely follows Cicero’s version of Stoicism in the speech of Cato, where knowledge is said to be one of the primary objects of natural impulse, sought by humans for its own sake (with delight as a by-product). Cicero’s contention might seem implausible given the paucity of true intellectuals in the world, but as proof, Cicero says, the Stoics cited the behavior of children: “This can be seen in the case of children, whom we may observe to delight in [*delectari*] finding something out for themselves by the use of reason, even though they gain nothing by it [...] The mental assent to what is false, the Stoics believe, is more repugnant to us than all the other things that are contrary to nature” (*Fin.* 3.17–18).

Notice, finally, that Augustine’s [4] “I fled from pain” recalls Cicero’s report (*Fin.* 3.51) that in the Stoic model freedom from pain is naturally sought (because it is a preferred indifferent). The idea here is that pain, like pleasure, is a subjective byproduct (*epigenêmêma*; Seneca: *accessio, hoc supervenit*<sup>17</sup>) of an objective condition in the animal; it is given by nature as a warning (*admonitio*) that one is wounded or ill (Seneca, *Ep.* 78.7–8). Elsewhere in the *Confessions* Augustine endorses the “by-product” account, asserting that pleasure is a “companion” of healthy states.<sup>18</sup> And in *Against Faustus*, he claims that humans and other animals flee pain because they value their self-preservation: “even wild animals flee pain, fear death, and avoid, with as much speed as they can, whatever can sunder the arrangement of their limbs and divide the coupling of flesh and spirit from their harmonious composition, for they [i.e. wild animals], too, feed and cherish their flesh. For [*enim*] no one hates his own flesh.”<sup>19</sup> It is the desire for self-preservation, and not the pursuit of pleasure, that he calls a “law of nature” (*naturae lex*).<sup>20</sup> So Augustine’s claim in *Confessions* 1.20.31 that he fled pain should be taken to mean that he avoided pain because pain betokens unhealthy states.

### Maturation of self-affiliation: social bonds

When Augustine recounts his adolescence in Books 2–6 of the *Confessions*, we find evidence that he has adopted not only the Stoic account of self-preservation for the individual, but also the idea that sociability is an outgrowth of self-affiliation. According to the Stoic accounts in Cicero and Hierocles, we love others because we love ourselves. Self-affiliation, also known as self-love<sup>21</sup> (hence “love” means the disposition to take care of someone), is instinctively extended first of all to one’s own children, who literally are part of oneself via reproductive inheritance. Augustine signals his acceptance of this kind of account when alluding to the unplanned pregnancy that arose while he was living with his girlfriend. His observation (at *Conf.* 4.2.2) that when a child is born, it compels its parents to love it (... *quamvis iam nata [proles] cogat se diligere*) presents his particular affection for his son Adeodatus as an instance of a general, law-like feature of human reproduction, echoing Cicero’s report of the Stoic assertion that we are driven by nature to love those whom we have generated (*apparet a natura ipsa ut eos quos genuerimus amemus impelli*). Cicero’s statement forms part of a larger argument that human beings are social animals:

They [the Stoics] think it is important to understand that nature engenders parents' love for their children ... Even among animals Nature's power can be observed; when we see the effort they spend on giving birth and on rearing, we seem to be listening to the actual voice of nature. As it is evident therefore that we naturally shrink from pain, so it is clear that it is by Nature itself that we are driven to love those whom we have engendered. Hence it follows that mutual attraction [*commendatio*] between human beings is also something natural. Consequently, the mere fact that someone is a man makes it incumbent on another man not to regard him as alien ... some large animals are born to serve themselves alone, whereas ... ants, bees, and storks do certain things for the sake of others as well. Human behavior in this respect is much more closely bonded.

(Fin. 3.62–3; trans. LS 57F, amended)

Cicero claims here that the natural love of one's own biological product, one's child, entails that solidarity with all human beings is natural. It is not obvious in the passage how this follows,<sup>22</sup> but Hierocles's complementary account of concentric familial-social circles of affectionate goodwill<sup>23</sup> lays out intermediate steps, and shares features with Augustine's account of human love in *Sermon* 349, which we are about to consider. Hierocles indicates that the attachment to others is derivative of the individual's self-affiliation. In his metaphorical description, the center point is one's own mind (*hēgemonikon*), the first surrounding "circle" is one's body, and the following enclosures contain other people by degrees of reproductive separation. Hence children, spouse, parents, and siblings are first after oneself; these are followed by grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles, and nephews and nieces. Subsequent are local neighbors, succeeded by members of one's deme, polis, and native country; the outermost circle contains all other human beings. As this account makes clear, human bonds arise from kinship, but also from proximity, or collaboration in projects of shared interest (as in the case of neighbors, or members of one's polis). The latter is the basis of friendship, defined as "sharing in the affairs of life" (Diog. Laert. 7.124). Doubtless we are meant to understand that these sources of affiliation overlap: proximity and collaboration typically supervene on family ties, and the possibility of shared interests requires some biological commonality (minimally, being of the same species).

In *Sermon* 349, we find Augustine not only concurring with Cicero's claim that human beings are like other animals in naturally loving their children, but also naming objects of human love that correspond to those enumerated by Hierocles:<sup>24</sup> children, wife, parents, siblings, relatives, and neighbors:

It's absolutely right for you to love [*diligere*] your wives, to love your children, to love your friends, to love your fellow citizens with human charity [*charitas*<sup>25</sup>]. All these names, you see, imply a bond of relationship [*necessitudinis vinculum*], and the glue, so to say, of charity. But you will observe that this sort of charity can be found also among the godless, that is, among pagans [...]. Which of them, after all, does not naturally love wife, children, brothers, neighbors, relations, friends, etc.? So this kind of charity is human. So if anyone is affected by such harshness [*crudelitate*] that he loses even the human feeling of love [*humanum dilectionis affectum*], and doesn't love [*non amet*] his children, doesn't love his wife, he isn't fit even to be counted among human beings. A man who loves his children is not thereby particularly praiseworthy; but one who does not love his children is certainly blameworthy, I mean, he should observe with whom he ought to have this kind of love [*dilectio*] in

common; even wild beasts love [*amant*] their children; adders love their children; tigers love their children; lions love their children. There is no wild creature, surely, that doesn't gently coo or purr over its young. I mean, while it may terrify human beings, it cherishes [*fovet*] its young [...]. So a man who doesn't love [*amat*] his children is worse than a lion. These are human sentiments [*humana sunt ista*], and they are lawful.

(Serm. 349.2; cf. 349.7; trans. Hill 1990–97, amended)

The term “lawful” here recalls Musonius Rufus's use of the same term to refer to the Stoic ethical category “proper function” in his *Discourse* 12 on family relations, a point to which we shall return below. At the moment we should attend to Augustine's assertion that “one who does not love his children is certainly blameworthy.” This recalls the Stoic contention that our capacity to know that we are social animals (thanks to human conceptual ability) is the source of a duty to extend affiliation to others: we ought to take care of one another, even when this entails hardship.<sup>26</sup>

Now Augustine's endorsement of “human love” in *Sermon* 349, with its similarities to Stoic accounts of social affiliation, helps us to solve a riddle about the *Confessions*. Despite the fact that he consistently presents his relationship with his “concubine” as merely a convenient arrangement for sex,<sup>27</sup> he describes his definitive separation from her in wrenching terms. “The woman with whom I habitually slept was torn away from my side because she was a hindrance to my [arranged] marriage. My heart which was deeply attached was cut [*concisum*] and wounded, and left a trail of blood” (*Conf.* 6.15.25). At first this seems odd in the context of the *Confessions*. This woman's educational level was undoubtedly vastly inferior to his own, so he was unable to converse with her about the things that mattered to him: philosophical questions about the nature of God and God's role in the cosmos, ethical theory, and high culture. Given this disparity, we could not describe the relationship as a romance, and Augustine makes clear that it was nothing like his intense intellectual friendships with Alypius, Nebridius, and Simplicianus, which complemented his spiritual quest. Yet it is these friendships that he considered most determinative of his identity at the time he wrote the *Confessions* – they were part of his spiritual quest, which culminated in the discovery of Platonic metaphysics. Why, then, should he present this sexual partnership as an integration of this woman into himself, conceiving of his loss of her as a cutting-off of part of his heart or self?

Apparently it is because of Augustine's debt to the Stoic theory of social *oikeiōsis*. His presentation makes sense if we consider that although she was not an intellectual peer, she was a “friend” according to the specifically Stoic definition of friendship as preserved in Greek sources and in Seneca. As we have seen, friendship is said to be a sharing in the affairs of life; the sources indicate that these “affairs” include such mundane things as eating together, sitting next to each other in the theater, or generally just being in the same situation,<sup>28</sup> although only the virtuous can be “true” friends. Cicero argues that this “ordinary and commonplace” (*vulgaris et mediocris*) kind of friendship is a form of natural self-affiliation (*conciliatio*), an affinity for what is akin to oneself.<sup>29</sup> So Augustine is telling us that by having a child with this woman and sharing in the activities of a household for eleven or more years<sup>30</sup> he had caused her to become like part of himself, because appropriation occurs naturally when we share the activities that make up our life as social animals. Moreover, given what he says in *Sermon* 349 about human love, he likely thinks that he would have been guilty of “harshness” (*crudelitas*) had he not felt the affection for her that accompanies familial relationships.

This reading is corroborated by the presence of the affiliation motif in his analysis of his bond with his mother, the severance of which Augustine also describes as a painful cutting or tearing (*dilaniari*).<sup>31</sup> Here the etiology he gives of his woundedness is that the habit of living with her in the same household (*consuetudo simul vivendi*) – a consequence of their being biologically related – had made her life part of his (*Conf.* 9.12.30). Indeed, it looks as though in the *Confessions*, Augustine uses the terminology of “cutting” or “tearing” of the self to refer to the destruction of a bond that was formed by the appropriation of others through kinship, proximity, and/or collaboration in projects of shared interest.

### **Augustine’s self-critiques: distorted impulses, social immaturity, failures in “proper functions”**

We have seen evidence that Augustine adopted Stoic theories of personal and social *oikeiôsis*. But two puzzles arise when we consider how his basic acceptance of these models coheres with his moral self-evaluations in the *Confessions*.

The first question concerns his assessment of babyhood and childhood. On the one hand, Augustine presents himself as a typical baby and young child, with the natural impulses proper to his species, as we saw above. But he claims elsewhere in *Confessions* 1 that he was innately perverse, driven to do many actions that were self-destructive and injurious to social relationships. Exactly how can *natural* impulses give rise to actions that do not conform to the *natural* laws of self-affiliation and sociability?

A second riddle concerns his adolescent years. Augustine shows in the case of his girlfriend that he thinks it is possible to have natural or “human” loves that arise out of relationships that are ethically unsound. His moral evaluation of the core acts that comprised his concubinage is entirely negative. This raises the question: Precisely how, in his account, can *natural* love arise out of relationships or as a result of actions that are morally *wrong*, within a normative theory that defines *ethical behavior* as following *natural* laws?<sup>32</sup>

These are the questions we must now address, beginning with a consideration of Augustine’s critique of his babyhood and childhood.

The argument of *Confessions* 1 as a whole is that baby Augustine’s pre-rational natural impulses, though oriented toward the right objects for a human being (1.20.31), lacked the self-modulation found in healthy animals. They were “excessive,” seeking more than his nature required for self-maintenance and development, and thus with the emergence of moral accountability later in childhood, he became immoderate and unjust. Augustine the adult author presents his evidence as empirical, and not limited to his own case. Toddlers generally are “greedy” (*plorans*) for unnecessary food and adulation, even at the expense of other babies who do in fact need food and attention (1.7.11). Moreover, these traits in babies are not passing or unimportant, but indicative of raw human nature, since adults do the same kinds of things in adult contexts.<sup>33</sup> The observations about babies are intended to serve his *modus tollens* argument: if there were not congenital psychological distortions in humans, then we would not need to discipline toddlers; but we do, so there are (1.7.11). Augustine is doing three things in *Confessions* 1.20.31 and 1.7.11, then. First, he is agreeing with the Stoics rather than the Epicureans, presenting a model in which babies are fundamentally oriented toward what supports life (nutrients and human society) rather than toward pleasure. Second, he is arguing that this natural orientation is now excessive, and that the overindulgence is counter-productive for one’s nature, which shows that the natural orientation must have been damaged,<sup>34</sup> something the Stoics failed to notice. Third, he is showing that the emergence of natural sociability is marred by competitiveness and jealousy resulting from individuals’ excessive desire for the natural objects.

This distortion of natural impulse apparently has as its basis a malfunction in pre-rational cognition. Recall that Augustine indicated in *Confessions* 1.20.31 that the good and natural desire for self-preservation depends upon the self-perception afforded by the interior sense. Here he suggests that the emergence of proprioception coincides with the beginning of domineering self-assertion.<sup>35</sup> Evidently he thinks that the sense of self allows for the erroneous perception that self is more important than it actually is.

So we have the answer to our question, how can natural impulses give rise to actions that do not conform to natural laws? Psychosomatic damage to the human organism skewed its non-rational perception, and consequently its natural impulses become overly acquisitive; this vitiation has been passed down through generations via human reproduction, and so is innate. Hence the impulses humans have “by nature” (that is, from birth) are not normatively natural.

Answering our other query, about natural bonds that are somehow unethical, demands prior understanding of how human intellectual development is supposed to guide maturation in the Stoic schema. Specifically, it depends upon the distinction between unreflectively acting upon natural impulses, and intentionally living in harmony with nature (one's own nature and universal Nature, the latter being equivalent to the providential will of God).<sup>36</sup> The possibility of transitioning to the second mode of life arises once reason has become “completed” at about age fourteen.<sup>37</sup> (If Augustine's sources did not report exact age demarcations, they did speak of concept formation beginning some time after the *infans* stage, and described the subsequent development of analogical and inferential skills.<sup>38</sup>) So adolescents can, in principle, become adept at discerning the regular patterns in the natural world – the general providential laws by which God administers the cosmos – and in the rational conduct of virtuous people (Cicero, *Fin.* 3.21). Because adolescents can thus recognize that certain kinds of acts in general tend to contribute to human well-being considered both individually and collectively, they become able to perform “proper functions” (*kathêkonta*, *officia*). A proper function is an action that has a reasonable justification (*eulogos apologia*, *probabilis ratio*) because it is an activity in itself (*auto*) adapted to natural constitutions (Diog. Laert. 7.107; Stob. 2.7.8; *Fin.* 3.58). Wisdom, a subsequent achievement, can in principle be attained at an advanced age, though it rarely is (Seneca, *Ep.* 124.12). Sages have stable dispositions to perform “right actions” (*katorthômata*, *facta recta*); these are known as “perfect” proper functions because they are suited to the particular circumstances, done from the right intention, and performed with knowledge of why they are right.<sup>39</sup> (By contrast, fools can perform merely proper functions that are not right actions, doing them in circumstances wherein they ought to be omitted, or from a wrong motive.<sup>40</sup>)

That Augustine is measuring his adolescence against this kind of developmental schema is suggested when he implies that for a long time he could not advance to acting in harmony with nature because he was not paying sufficient attention to what happens by nature. He endorses the Chrysippean model of morality as respect for one's own nature and conformity to God's “ordering” of Nature in general, in the early books of the *Confessions* (1.10.16, 3.8.15–16), asserting that the social bond which naturally ties us to God is broken when we do not conform to the divinely established and continuously administered natural order, that is, God's governance of the cosmic city.<sup>41</sup> It therefore appears as a deficiency that “the rational, mathematical ordering of things, the order of seasons,” and the predictability of solstices, equinoxes, and eclipses, which he had read about in books by philosophers, did not become significant in his life choices until his mid- to late-twenties (*Conf.* 5.3.3–6). These cosmological items are found in Seneca's proofs for the providence of God in *On Providence* (1.2–4) and *Natural Questions* (16.1–3), and it is here that Augustine mentions Seneca by



name. Augustine's self-diagnosis, then, is that his philosophical–theological–ethical development was retarded,<sup>42</sup> slowed by his distraction in the unsophisticated religious mythologies through which he sought to justify his sexual immoderation.<sup>43</sup>

The self-criticism here and in his judgment upon his concubinage, which we are about to examine, is that his insensitivity to the divinely established natural order rendered him incapable of identifying proper functions. In tandem, his social affiliations were simply spontaneous, not structured by reason. Throughout his adolescence he was not advancing toward wisdom. In relation to Seneca's three stages of progress, for instance, his teenage and twenty-something self failed to make the initial grade, because he had lust and fear of death.<sup>44</sup>

That this is the self-diagnosis regarding his girlfriend can be seen when we compare his *Sermon* 349 about human loves, quoted above, with his treatise *On the Good of Marriage*, which he commenced immediately after finishing the *Confessions*. The distinctions Augustine makes in these works, as well as his examples and terminology, are strikingly similar to Musonius Rufus's application of the Stoic theory of proper functions to the case of sexual mores.<sup>45</sup> Musonius and Augustine divide the contrary to nature (*para phusin, contra naturam*)<sup>46</sup> from the natural or the "human," and then divide the natural or human into the "legitimate" and the "illegitimate." By "legitimate" acts (*nomima, kata nomon, legitima, licita*), they refer to the "justifiable," that which is defensible by reason.<sup>47</sup> Thus "legitimate" is another name for "proper function,"<sup>48</sup> and the "liceity" in question is conformity to the natural or common law. Sexual intercourse within marriage is given as an example of a legitimate natural action or proper function.<sup>49</sup> The rationale here, apparently, is that the act that can result in children should be done within a context that provides for long-term support and education of children.<sup>50</sup> "Illegitimate" but nonetheless minimally natural acts include a man's intercourse with a courtesan, and adultery.<sup>51</sup> Acts such as these tend to be done "only in hiding and in secret," according to both Musonius and Augustine, because they are commonly recognizable as illegitimate.<sup>52</sup>

This analysis helps us to understand why Augustine makes so much of the fact that he was not married to his long-term partner (*Conf.* 4.2.2). He thinks that his relationship with her fell short of being a proper function. His state of mind as he entered the liaison was devoid of practical wisdom (*inops prudentiae, Conf.* 4.2.2), meaning that he did not recognize which actions were defensible by reason, and which were not. Furthermore, Augustine indicates that what was right for someone of his intellectual bent was to forego marriage altogether to live the ascetic life of a philosopher (*Conf.* 6.14.24; cf. 8.11.27, 8.12.30).<sup>53</sup> So, marrying his girlfriend would not have been a right action, given his role in the providential ordering of the universe, despite the fact that marriage is in general a proper function.<sup>54</sup>

Thus Augustine presents his adolescent self as thoughtlessly following natural impulses, rather than living intentionally in agreement with the natural order established by God. And now we know his answer to the question, how can *natural* love arise out of relationships and as a result of actions that are morally flawed, that is, not in conformity with *nature*? In the early stages of development, what natural law requires of humans is that they follow their basic God-given natural impulses, like other animals. With the emergence of mental acuity, however, what is natural for them is to use their reason to shape impulse into an art of living.<sup>55</sup> This means selecting natural objects with attention to context. Merely natural collaborations, pursued without regard to the relevant circumstances or without a well-reasoned motive, will not be proper or morally correct; but they will nonetheless create social-affective bonds analogous to the group affiliations experienced by non-rational social animals.

## Conclusions

Augustine's debt to Stoic psychological and ethical theory was considerable, even when he sought to improve upon the Stoics' account of the human condition. This is clear from the *Confessions*, where he employs concepts of self-affiliation, self-perception, sociability, maturation and ethical reasoning that he found in his Stoic sources. While thus believing that the Stoics' basic account of humans as rational social animals was sound, Augustine thought that their failure to see that we are born dysfunctional was naive (*De civ. D.* 19.4), and consequently he developed his own account of natural human goodness marred by inherited woundedness. But he articulated this in terms of the psychological framework he found in his Stoic sources. Accordingly he exploited Stoic psychology to move beyond the mythical Manichean explanation for the disorders that he noticed within himself and in society (*Conf.* 5.10.18), replacing that with an account of self-awareness and impulse skewed by psychosomatic damage. It is in his philosophical autobiography that Augustine most thoroughly articulated this revised Stoic anthropology, using it to understand his youthful self-perceptions, desires, successes and failures.

## Notes

- 1 Abbreviations of works cited of Augustine are as follows: *Conf.*, *Confessiones*; *C. Faust.*, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*; *C. Iul.*, *Contra Iulianum*; *De bono coniug.*, *De bono coniugali*; *De civ. D.*, *De civitate Dei*; *De dial.*, *De dialectica*; *De doct. Christ.*, *De doctrina Christiana*; *De Gen. ad litt.*, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*; *De lib. arb.*, *De libero arbitrio*; *De mag.*, *De magistro*; *De quant. anim.*, *De quantitate animae*; *De serm. Dom. in monte*, *De sermone Domini in monte*; *De Trin.*, *De Trinitate*; *De vera relig.*, *De vera religione*; *Div. quaest.*, *De diversis quaestionibus*; *Enarr. in Ps.*, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*; *Ep.*, *Epistulae*; *Retract.*, *Retractationes*; *Serm.*, *Sermones*.
- 2 *Conf.* 1 = *infantia* and *pueritia* (for Augustine, the transition to *pueritia* occurs with the acquisition of speech, which is distinct from the mere imitation of words and phrases, *Conf.* 1.8.13); *Conf.* 2–6 = *adulescentia*, which begins with puberty. Young adulthood (*iuventus*) apparently begins at age 30 (*Conf.* 7.1.1). Cf. *De vera relig.* 26.48. Of the texts listed in O'Donnell 1992: 2.56, Varro in Servius on *Aen.* 5.295 is most like Augustine and Seneca in beginning from *infantia* (though the characteristics of the ages are not described with any thoroughness); cf. also Varro, *Ling.* 6.7.52.
- 3 Hultgren (1939: 237ff., 251ff.) and Holte (1962: 239) paid some attention to *oikeiôsis* theory in Augustine, but not in the *Confessions*. Hadot (1968) and O'Donovan (1980) make mention of *oikeiôsis* theory in *Conf.* 1.20.31; see note 9 below. Obviously there is Neoplatonism in the *Confessions* (metaphysics and *eros* theory; cf. Byers 2013: 49–53), but it would be an error to suppose that the text therefore contained no, or only adulterated, Stoicism. Regarding “Christian” philosophy, Augustine tells us that what he got from Christianity was the idea that grace resulting from the incarnation is medicinal for weakness of will (*Conf.* 7.19.25, 7.21.27) (NB not his basic philosophical psychology or metaphysics). On Stoicism in the later books of the *Conf.*, see Byers 2013: 23–54, 78, 153, 172–206; Ekenberg 2014: 30–1, 35–6; O'Daly 1981.
- 4 In *Conf.* 6.16.26, Augustine reports having discussed *de finibus bonorum et malorum* with his friends. This is either a reference to Cicero's work (cf. *De civ. D.* 9.4), or to Varro's *De philosophia* (cf. *De civ. D.* 19.1).
- 5 E.g. Varro's *De philosophia*; Cicero's *Fat.*, lost portion; see Courcelle 1969: 192–4 n. 201, Solignac 1958, and Betagh 2010: 37 on Augustine's use of other doxographies.
- 6 *C. Faust.* 21.5 (cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.4.16; Seneca, *Ep.* 121.14–17, 121.21, 121.24). Augustine here repeats Ephesians 5:29 (“No one hates his own flesh”), but uses technical terminology from Stoicism (per Cicero and Seneca) to explain it. For “rational mortal animal,” see e.g. *De quant. anim.* 35.47; *De mag.* 8; *De dial.* 9.17; *De civ. D.* 8.4, 9.13, 16.8; *De Trin.* 7.4, 15.7; *Serm.* 358.3; *Enarr. in Ps.* 29.2.2; *De serm. Dom. in monte* 2.51; cf. Cicero, *Acad.* 2(= *Lucullus*).7.21; Seneca, *Ep.* 58.14, 41.8.
- 7 *C. Faust.* 21.7; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 121.10–17 (*constitutio* for *sustasis*); Cicero, *Fin.* 3.5.16 (*status*).
- 8 *De Trin.* 14.14.18. Cf. *De civ. D.* 19.4.

- 9 “tunc ... meamque incolumitatem ... curae habebam, custodiebam interiore sensu integritatem sensuum meorum inque ipsis parvis parvarumque rerum cogitationibus veritate delectabar. falli nolebam, memoria vigebam, locutione instruebar, amicitia mulcebar, fugiebam dolorem, abiectionem, ignorantiam.” All translations of the *Conf.* are from Chadwick 1991, often amended. Hadot (1968: I 292 n. 1) flags a phrase which I have left out of my quotation: “At that time [i.e. childhood], I existed, I lived and thought, and took care for my self-preservation, a trace of your transcendent unity whence I derived my existence.” Hadot sees this as a “transposition of Stoicism” first articulated by Marius Victorinus. According to Hadot, Victorinus applied the Stoic doctrine of *oikeiōsis* to God the Father, when he claimed that God “watches over” himself (*semet ipsum custodire*). From this one instance of *custodire* I do not think we can conclude that Victorinus conceived of God in terms of *oikeiōsis*. Victorinus might instead be referring to the Neoplatonic idea that the One has simple self-awareness as a self-possession (*echein heauto*), without duality of subject and object (*Enn.* III 9. 9, VI 7. 39). Moreover, Augustine does not use the term *custodire*, or any term for “self-preservation,” to describe God. In this phrase from *Conf.* 1.20.31, Augustine is simply making an analogy between God, who is a metaphysical unity, and mortals, which keep themselves in being by eating, avoiding predators, etc. The animal does this by following a natural inclination given to it by God. O’Donovan (1980: 50) incorrectly supposes that by “hidden unity” Augustine refers to the original human condition before the fall. He also claims that Augustine deviates from Stoic anthropology by saying that the human being has an impulse to “live in this intimacy/union [*coniunctio*] of body and soul.” But the Stoics held that the human being is a thorough mixture of body and soul; this might be plausibly described as a union. The real difference between Augustine and the Stoics is in the metaphysics of the soul: Augustine thinks the soul is immaterial, the Stoics think it is material. But that is irrelevant to *oikeiōsis* as a psychological theory.
- 10 Seneca, *Ep.* 82.15, 121.17, 121.20–1; Cicero, *Off.* 1.4.12.
- 11 In their claims about the natural goal of human life, Stoics and Epicureans both cited the behavior of babies, who, like wild animals, were thought to be “the voice of nature” because they were pre-inculturation. See e.g. *Fin.* 1.9.30, 2.10.31–2; Brunschwig 1986: 118–29 *passim*.
- 12 As Inwood (2007: 342) notes, Seneca’s point here is that even the hedonist must admit that pleasure is sought for the sake of self, i.e. there is a more fundamental orientation to one’s constitution.
- 13 Similarly for static pleasure (see note 12).
- 14 *Fin.* 3.5.16; Seneca, *Ep.* 121.11–14. The idea here is that activities such as avoiding a threat or pursuing food require awareness that a threat is a threat to oneself and that food is food for oneself, which requires comparison of objects sensed to one’s own constitution. Brittain (2002: 263ff.) speaks of “quasi-concepts.” “Constitution” means its ruling element (*hēgemonikon*, *animus*) in relation to its body (Seneca, *Ep.* 121.14). What is the continuous subject or self in this account (cf. Inwood 2007: 341–2)? It is the *hēgemonikon* together with the body, that is, the organism as a whole; the *hēgemonikon* continuously governs the body, but the manner in which it does so (the “constitution”) differs at various stages of development.
- 15 Augustine’s claim that this emerged after birth does not necessarily commit him to the Antiochean rather than the Stoic position (see Inwood 1984: 170–1; Ramelli 2009: 40). He seems to believe that perception of the particular senses and limbs is present from birth (*De lib. arb.* 2.4.10, *necesse est etiam sentiat se videre dum videt*; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 121.12; Hierocles, *El. Eth.* 6.1–9; and compare *Conf.* 1.6.7 to Hierocles, *El. Eth.* 5.55), while overall proprioception is activated with further development of the body.
- 16 The texts given by O’Daly 1987: 103–4 from Plotinus (and Porphyry) are not relevant, upon close inspection. E.g. when Plotinus addresses reflexivity (*Enn.* IV 5. 5, 8. 8, V 3. 2) he is talking about the perceptive part of the soul perceiving the body, or about a perception of one’s own desire, whereas Augustine speaks of the interior sense perceiving the animal’s life or sense experiences, and does not mention reflexivity of desire. Again, *Enn.* IV 7. 6 addresses the combinative function of the common sense, which Augustine does not mention. In *De lib. arb.* Augustine ascribes both perception of common sensibles and self-perception serving self-preservation to the interior sense; the mention of the common sensibles prompts O’Daly 1987: 102 to consider the relevance of an Aristotelian “common sense” (cf. Toivanen 2013: 370). More pertinent is Aetius’ report, “the Stoics called the common sense an interior touch, in accord with which we perceive ourselves” (in Stob. 1.50.6); cf. Augustine, *De quant. anim.* 33.71: “The soul attends to itself in touch ... it accepts and desires those things which are in accordance with the nature of its body.” While internal “touch” for the Stoics implies materialism (so Hierocles, *El. Eth.* 3.55), Augustine evidently retained this language of “touching” as a metaphor.
- 17 Diog. Laert. 7.85–6; Seneca, *De vita beata* 9.1–2. In *nuce*, Stoic reasoning against the cradle argument for hedonism was that it is rash to infer from, say, babies’ crying when they feel the pain of hunger,

- that babies' natural goal is pain's contradictory (the absence of pain, static pleasure) or contrary (kinetic pleasure); for if one of these were the natural goal, then giving the hungry baby anesthesia or sugar would be putting the baby into its natural state; but in fact the baby who is merely given pleasure will die from lack of nutrients; this tells us that what the baby was crying *for* was not pleasure but nutrients; so it is a healthy condition that is the animal's goal, not pleasure. It is interesting to note in relation to this "by-product" account that contemporary neuroscience distinguishes between nociception (the registering of tissue damage) and the sensible pain that follows.
- 18 *Conf.* 10.31.44, *adiungit se tamquam pedisequa periculosa iucunditas*; cf. *De civ. D.* 19.1, *Conf.* 10.35.54, 10.35.57. Pace Miles 1991: 20, 37.
  - 19 *C. Faust.* 21.7 (trans. Teske 2007, amended). Cf. *C. Faust.* 21.5, 21.14; *Enarr.in Ps.* 99.5, 148.3 (compare Augustine, *utilia sumendi*, to Seneca, *Ep.* 121.21, *ad utilia impetus*); *De quant. anim.* 33.71; *De lib. arb.* 3.23.69–70.
  - 20 *C. Faust.* 21.5, cf. 21.7.
  - 21 E.g. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.5.16: *se diligere = sibi conciliari*; Seneca, *Ep.* 121.24: *conciliatio et charitas sui*; Gellius, *NA* 12.5.7; cf. Hierocles *El. Eth.* 9.1–10.
  - 22 For discussion of this problem, see e.g. Blundell 1990: 223ff.; Engberg-Pedersen 2006 – and the references therein.
  - 23 *El. Eth.* 9.1–10: *sterketikos*; Hierocles in Stob. 4.84.23: *eunoia*.
  - 24 Note that Augustine's *Serm.* 349 differs essentially from the Antiochean account in *Fin.* 5.65 (which might otherwise have been thought the source for it) insofar as it is not concerned with justice.
  - 25 Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 121.24, *charitas*. Hence it would be a mistake to suppose that the term "charity" itself signaled a uniquely Christian and non-Stoic sense of love of neighbor.
  - 26 *Fin.* 3.19.64, 3.20.68; Hierocles in Stob. 4.84.23; cf. Vogt 2008: 103ff. Pace Striker 1991: 58, this is not conceived of as trading self-realization for the well-being of the group. The common good is sought *as* the rational individual's well-being, since (a) the individual is an integral part of the whole and relies upon the whole for her own thriving, and (b) it is reasonable to treat others as oneself, given that they have an identical nature as oneself.
  - 27 *Conf.* 4.2.2, 6.5.15. Augustine characterizes this relationship as temporary concubinage: the plan was always for him to marry and have his "official" family with someone else. Presumably this woman had a social status inferior to his.
  - 28 Diog. Laert. 7.124; Seneca, *Ep.* 48.2–3; Cicero, *Amic.* 5.19; Hierocles, *El. Eth.* 11.15–20.
  - 29 *Amic.* 5.19–20, 21.81, 8.27, 9.29. Cf. Weiss 2014: 135–7.
  - 30 From the age of eighteen or nineteen to twenty-nine or thirty. (Adeodatus was sixteen years old in *On the Teacher* [*Conf.* 9.6.14], written in 389 [*Retract.* 1.12], so the partnership dates to at least 373. The split occurred in 384 or 385 [*Conf.* 6.11.18].)
  - 31 *Conf.* 4.7.12 and 9.12.30 respectively; cf. *Conf.* 6.15.25.
  - 32 Augustine (cf. Diog. Laert. 7.88; Cicero, *Nat. D.* 1.14.36) thinks of ethics as conformity to natural or common law, e.g. *C. Faust.* 15.7, *De Gen. ad litt.* 9.17, *Div. quaest.* 53.1–2, *Ep.* 157.3.15.
  - 33 *Conf.* 1.19.30 *ad fin.* Wanting more than is needed is an "illegitimate desire," meaning that it exceeds the boundary of natural law (*Conf.* 1.18.29, 2.2.4, 2.3.8). It is clear that *Conf.* 1.19.30 is indebted to Seneca, *Constant.* 12.2. But in concluding that there is *congenital* disorder in humans, Augustine obviously departs from the Stoics. While Seneca sometimes says that babies are destined to wrongdoing, he attributes this to faulty societal conditioning.
  - 34 As a result of the original sin (Gen 3:6).
  - 35 *Conf.* 1.6.8 seq. Contrast *Conf.* 1.6.7 (before proprioception), where he says his impulses were perfectly moderated.
  - 36 Seneca, *Ep.* 107.7–12 (quoted by Augustine, *De civ. D.* 5.8); *Fin.* 3.45, 3.21; Diog. Laert. 7.86–8; Striker 1991: 4–7.
  - 37 In humans, repeated sensory experience leads to the formation of basic concepts (*prolēpseis*) by about age seven (Aetius, 4.11.1–4; the texts in *SVF* 1.149; Jackson-McCabe 2004: 327–41). Reason is "completed" through increasingly sophisticated use of rational operations such as analogy, comparison, contrast, and inference by age fourteen (*SVF* 1.149; Diog. Laert. 7.52–4; cf. Inwood 1984: 72–4).
  - 38 Seneca, *Ep.* 120.4–5, 121.11–12; Cicero, *Fin.* 3.21, 3.33.
  - 39 Cicero, *Fin.* 3.21; Diog. Laert. 7.87, 7.109–10.
  - 40 Diog. Laert. 7.108–9; *Fin.* 3.59, 3.20, 3.58–9; Philo, *De cherubim* 14–15; White 1978: 111–15.
  - 41 *Conf.* 3.8.15. Cf. the repeated epithets for God: *ordinator rerum omnium naturalium* (*Conf.* 1.10.16, 4.3.4, cf. 3.8.16); *administrans* (*Conf.* 6.5.7, 7.1.2, 7.6.8; cf. *administrare* in Cicero, *Nat. D.* 2.30.75 seq. and

- dioikein* in Chrysippus, Diog. Laert. 7.87); *moderator universitatis* (Conf. 7.6.10). See also the emphasis on providence in Conf. 5.6.11, 5.7.12, 5.8.14, 5.8.15, 5.9.16, 5.9.17, 5.13.23; and compare Conf. 1.10.16, 3.8.16, 6.7.12 with Cleanthes in Seneca, *Ep.* 107.11 (quoted by Augustine, *De civ. D.* 5.8).
- 42 Hence his self-accusations of impiety in failing to recognize the providential natural order, e.g. Conf. 7.6.8. Cf. his (compensatory?) insistence on God as administrator throughout the early books of the *Confessions*: *ordinator rerum omnium naturalium* (Conf. 1.10.16, 4.3.4, cf. 3.8.16); *administrans* (Conf. 6.5.7, 7.1.2, 7.6.8; cf. *administrare* in Cicero, *Nat. D.* 2.30.75 seq. and *dioikein* in Chrysippus, Diog. Laert. 7.87); *moderator universitatis* (Conf. 7.6.10); Conf. 5.6.11, 5.7.12, 5.8.14, 5.8.15, 5.9.16, 5.9.17, 5.13.23; and compare Conf. 1.10.16, 3.8.16, 6.7.12 with Cleanthes in Seneca, *Ep.* 107.11 (quoted by Augustine, *De civ. D.* 5.8).
- 43 Conf. 5.10.18 on Manichaeism; cf. Conf. 4.3.4–6 on astrology. As Augustine presents it, up until this point he was not strongly motivated by a scientific/philosophical interest in cosmology or astronomy as such, but was drawn to these cosmological mythologies because he was seeking an answer to the problem of evil in the sense of an exculpatory explanation for his own doing of evil.
- 44 Seneca, *Ep.* 75.8–15; Augustine, Conf. 4.6.11 seq.
- 45 The detailed parallels suggest that Augustine knew this treatise in a Latin translation or paraphrase. On *oikeiōsis* and Musonius’ account of marriage, see Gill 2000: 601–3.
- 46 Augustine, *C. Iul.* 5.17; Conf. 3.8.15; Musonius, fr. 12; cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.18, *Nat. D.* 2.134 seq.
- 47 Musonius: *nomizein dikaia*; cf. Augustine, *Serm.* 349.3: that which is not condemnable by reason, *ratione damnabile*.
- 48 Augustine, *De bono coniug.* 16.18: *licitum, officium*; cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 12.15.31: *licitos mores*.
- 49 Musonius, fr. 12; Augustine, *C. Iul.* 5.17, *Serm.* 349.3, *De bono coniug.* 3.3–6.6, 16.18, Conf. 4.2.2 (*coniugium legitimum*).
- 50 Musonius, fr. 12; Conf. 4.2.2, 6.12.22.
- 51 Musonius, fr. 12; Augustine, *Serm.* 349.2–4, cf. 51.21.
- 52 Musonius, fr. 12; Augustine, *Serm.* 349.4.
- 53 For an account of how he eventually became motivated to adopt this lifestyle, see Byers 2013: 37–9, 172–85.
- 54 More generally, he thinks that marriage as a “right action” would require “divine love” in addition to “human love,” i.e. loving God more than one’s spouse, loving God in one’s spouse, and wanting one’s spouse to love God (*Serm.* 349.7).
- 55 Cf. Diog. Laert. 7.86; Varro in Augustine *De civ. D.* 19.3; Seneca, *Ep.* 121.16; Cicero, *Fin.* 3.20–1.

## Further reading

C. Brittain, “Non-rational Perception in the Stoics and Augustine,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2002): 253–308, contains analysis of Augustine’s reference to “interior sense” in *City of God*. S. Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine: A Stoic-Platonic Synthesis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013) is a study of Augustine’s engagement with Stoic epistemology, action theory and virtue ethics, with responses to Sorabji (2000). Concerning Augustine’s knowledge of Stoic theory of “sayables” (*lekta*), see A. A. Long, “Stoic Linguistics, Plato’s *Cratylus*, and Augustine’s *De Dialectica*,” in D. Frede and B. Inwood (eds), *Language and Learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 36–55. G. O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), is a study focused mainly on Augustine’s engagement with Platonism, but with some reference to Stoicism. See also G. O’Daly, “Augustine on the Measurement of Time: Some Comparisons with Aristotelian and Stoic Texts,” in his *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought* (London: Variorum Publishing, 1981), pp. 171–9. J. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) is a comprehensive study of Augustine, with sections on Augustine’s knowledge of Stoic logic. R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) contains a section on Augustine.

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## 5

# BOETHIUS AND STOICISM

*Matthew D. Walz*

Around 422, owing to accusations of treason, Boethius was imprisoned by Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, and sentenced to death. A few years later he was executed – an unseemly end for a man devoted to learning and the public good. As a young scholar, he had grand plans to translate all of Plato’s dialogues and Aristotle’s treatises into Latin – with commentaries to boot!<sup>1</sup> As a politician, he espoused ideals inspired by the books he had studied, especially Plato’s *Republic*. Sitting in prison, however, and condemned to death, Boethius was sick with grief, his unfinished projects and high ideals only exacerbating his sorrow.

Is it too far-fetched to imagine that in this situation Boethius yearned to confront his lot more like a Stoic – untroubled, objective, self-sufficient? This may seem unlikely, given the criticisms he levels at the Stoics in works written prior to his imprisonment. But in the face of death, Boethius finds a place for Stoicism in life. We see this in the *magnum opus* he wrote during his imprisonment, the *Consolation of Philosophy*, which recounts a dialogue between the Prisoner (i.e. Boethius as a character in his own work) and Philosophy, a mysterious lady who appears to him in his cell. Under her care, the Prisoner recovers from grief by achieving a Stoic attitude – a crucial stage in his convalescence, though one he passes beyond on the way toward full intellectual health. And so, although in this work Boethius still considers Stoicism to be philosophically constricting, he has nonetheless learned how it may prove indispensable in one’s intellectual development.

In the *Consolation*, then, Boethius arrives at a twofold judgment – a “mixed review” – of Stoicism. That he remains critical of Stoicism is evident in the opening pages. When Philosophy first appears, her clothes are described as tattered; for “the hands of certain violent men tore this garment and carried off little portions as each was able” (*Cons.* 1.1, 23–24). Philosophy recalls her own persecution, especially in the persons of Socrates and Plato, who clothed her beautifully with courageous perseverance. Since then, however, Philosophy has not fared well:

After [Plato], the crowds of Epicureans and Stoics and the rest, each for their own part, were struggling to go and capture his inheritance and to drag me away screaming and resisting, as if I were part of their loot. Doing so, they tore apart this garment which I had woven with my own hands, and they went off with little pieces they had snatched from it, believing that the whole of me had gone off with

them. Because a few traces of my outfit were seen in these pieces, their imprudence regarded me as their kin, and not a few of them strayed off into the errors of the profane multitude.

(Cons. 1.3, 21–30)

The Stoics mistake a small part of Philosophy's garment for the whole of her. Instead of possessing the fullness of philosophy, as did Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics possess only a portion of its appearance. Stoicism is philosophically superficial and incomplete.<sup>2</sup>

This severe take on Stoicism must be qualified, however, in light of a subsequent passage in Book 1, in which Philosophy relates how not only Greek philosophers suffered for her sake, but Roman ones as well. The three Romans she names – Canius, Seneca, and Soranus – were all Stoics (Cons. 1.3, 31–7). The pieces of her garment that they snatched sufficed for facing adversity under tyranny in an exemplary fashion.<sup>3</sup> Something about Stoicism, then, is able to fortify human beings in times of distress.

This mixed review makes sense in the *Consolation*; for there Stoicism is presented as a necessary stage within the Prisoner's philosophical development. Though it be superficial and incomplete, it is also indispensable. This dual characterization, moreover, illuminates Boethius's criticism of Stoicism in earlier works;<sup>4</sup> for it helps us see what those critiques are ultimately driving at, namely, the philosophical superficiality and incompleteness of Stoicism, which compares poorly with the multidimensional, expansive thinking Boethius finds in Plato and Aristotle.

In what follows we explore Boethius's works chronologically in order to elucidate his twofold judgment of Stoicism. Beginning with references to the Stoics in his logical works<sup>5</sup> and then turning to the *Consolation*, we delineate the intelligible contours of Stoicism as Boethius sees it, including the positive impetus Stoicism provides toward a philosophical apprehension of reality as well as its innate inadequacy for attaining the full measure of wisdom available to us through philosophical inquiry.

### Boethius's criticism of Stoicism in his logical commentaries

Boethius's primary aim in his logical works is to hand on the Aristotelian tradition of logic. Consequently, he spends little time explicating Stoic logic. Clearly he is familiar with Stoic logic, and he finds much of it wanting.<sup>6</sup> The Stoics appear explicitly in five works written prior to the *Consolation*: his two commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge*,<sup>7</sup> his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, his second commentary on *On Interpretation*, and his commentary on Cicero's *Topics*. We pass over the two commentaries on the *Isagoge*, since in them he mentions the Stoics only to set them aside.<sup>8</sup> Exploring relevant passages from the other three works brings to light the philosophical shortcomings Boethius perceives in Stoicism.<sup>9</sup>

In his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, Boethius alludes to the Stoics on a few occasions, although he does not explicate their positions in detail. The context in which he mentions the Stoics and the basis of his disagreements with them suggest what is on Boethius's mind. Each reference to the Stoics occurs in his comments on chapter 10, where Aristotle distinguishes various types of opposites. Boethius remarks that Peripatetics and Stoics have diverse views concerning opposites, especially regarding whether "opposite" is univocal (i.e. whether it can be defined in a single way that covers all cases of opposition; *In Cat.* 4, 264C–D). According to Boethius, the Peripatetics rightly follow Aristotle by distinguishing different types of opposition, whereas the Stoics, despite their longiloquence regarding logical matters, forego such distinction-making in favor of a simplified, either–or notion of opposition.



Boethius recalls the Stoics' either-or account of opposition when discussing contrariety later in the chapter. He alludes critically to the Stoic account of virtue and vice as contraries that lack any in-between condition. According to the Stoics, "indifferents" stand between virtue and vice as things open to being used either virtuously or viciously, such as wealth, power, beauty, and the like. The Stoics' account fits with another position of theirs that Boethius points out, namely, that virtue is knowledge (*In Cat.* 4, 277A). Accordingly, one either knows what is right to do with indifferents or does not – the latter a virtuous condition, the former a vicious one. Boethius thinks such a picture lacks sufficient nuance. For him the contrariety of virtue and vice leaves open the possibility of in-between conditions in which one is neither fully virtuous nor fully vicious, and he articulates the logic operative in contrariety thus understood. Like hot and cold, virtue and vice are truly opposed. Yet just as tepidity stands between hotness and coldness, so certain dispositions stand between goodness and badness or justice and injustice, even if we lack names for these in-between conditions (*In Cat.* 4, 268B–269A).

But why address an issue of moral psychology in a commentary on a logical work?<sup>10</sup> Here we set aside any attempt to answer this question fully.<sup>11</sup> It suffices for our purposes to recognize that the Stoics are squarely on Boethius's mind inasmuch as their crude account of opposition obscures the contrariety of virtue and vice. Instead of beginning with the patent reality of in-between moral dispositions – not to mention in-between natural conditions, such as tepidity – and working out the logic of contrariety therefrom, the Stoics impose an either-or notion of opposition on moral reality, thus ignoring the nuances of human character. The Stoics, in other words, "logicize" reality by squeezing it into simplified categories. From Boethius's perspective, this approach is superficial; it stops at the mere naming of virtue and vice as opposites and fails to capture the intelligible variability discoverable in our experience. The function of logic is not to impose categories upon reality, but to allow reality to manifest itself more clearly by adequating our thinking and speaking precisely to its intelligible contours. Hence Boethius consistently rejects the logicizing tendency of the Stoics in favor of the nuanced realism of Aristotelian logic.

In his second commentary on *On Interpretation*,<sup>12</sup> Boethius calls attention to another problem in Stoic thinking, namely, a failure to distinguish adequately between sensitive and intellectual cognition and, consequently, not deploying this distinction to account for the meaningfulness of human language. The Stoics seem to speak metaphorically about how in human thinking a form is impressed upon wax or chiseled into marble or written on paper (2 *In Periherm.* 1.1, 33,20–35,21), and yet how are such descriptions metaphorical if the Stoics do not distinguish essentially between sensitive and intellectual cognition? Boethius is aware that this disagreement goes beyond signification and concerns human cognition in general; for it has to do with the intellect's capacity to know reality in a manner that transcends the individuating conditions of matter so as to grasp things universally and signify this in the spoken and written word. As Boethius sees it, the Stoics' corporealistic view of reality blots out such a picture of human cognition. Hence "what the Stoics say about this matter should be passed over" (2 *In Periherm.* 1.1, 24,19–20).

Boethius also criticizes the Stoics in his comments on chapter 9 of *On Interpretation*, which deals with the truth and falsity of propositions about the future. Boethius thinks the Stoics are mistaken not only regarding the determinate character of future events, but also in their interpretation of Aristotle. The Stoics hold that all things come about by fate, i.e. governing causes acting in such a manner that what does not come about was not in fact able to happen (2 *In Periherm.* 3.9, 197,10–198,4). In this view, what is possible is coextensive with what has not yet come about but will come about in accord with fate. Boethius rejects this. With

Aristotle and the Peripatetics, he holds that openness (i.e. the potentiality that a particular event comes-about-or-does-not-come-about) belongs to some aspects of the future, owing not merely to human freedom, but also to the character of material realities.

Again, Boethius is aware that the disagreement here has more to do with the nature of reality in general than with the truth or falsity of certain propositions. As Boethius puts it, “Neither unfittingly nor inconsistently did Aristotle, when speaking about propositions, put off a disputation concerning higher realities and concerning things perhaps not pertaining to the logical art” (2 *In Periherm.* 3.9, 198,10–14). Following suit, Boethius neither expands on what Aristotle says about “higher realities” nor tells how Aristotle might respond to the Stoics, although he considers the Peripatetic accounts of chance, freedom, and material nature to be better than those of the Stoics. Boethius is dissatisfied with the flat corporealism of the Stoics – in this instance insofar as it results in a fatalistic understanding of reality.

Boethius connects the Stoics’ fatalism with their mistaken reading of Aristotle. Aristotle’s acceptance of openness in the future, owing to both human freedom and natural realities themselves, fits well with how Aristotle explicates “the mode of propositions concerning the future” (2 *In Periherm.* 3.9, 198,4–8). Every proposition about a future contingent event is either true or false, says Aristotle, although its truth or falsity is not yet definite. Indeed, the indefinite character of the truth or falsity of a proposition about a future contingent befits the event’s openness either to come about or not to come about. The Stoics do not see it this way, no doubt because they are at odds with Aristotle concerning “the higher realities.” Hence they interpret Aristotle through the lens of fatalism. Aristotle claims that propositions about future contingents are *either true or false*, but the Stoics “judged them to be [in Aristotle’s view] *neither true nor false*” – and, Boethius adds, “they judged falsely” (2 *In Periherm.* 3.9, 208,6–7). Boethius explains:

For Aristotle does not say that both are neither true nor false, but that each of them is either true or false, yet not in that definite way in which propositions about the past or present are. Rather, there are two sorts of declarative statements: there are some in which it is not the case that either the true or the false might be found, but in which one [of the contradictories] is definitely true and the other definitely false; in others, one [of the contradictories] is true and the other false, but indefinitely and in a way open to change – and this is so by its very nature and not only in relation to our ignorance and awareness.

(2 *In Periherm.* 3.9, 198,7–18)

In fact, Boethius continues, if every such proposition were definitely true or definitely false, then one would have to hold that all things come about out of necessity – as do the Stoics.

Boethius’s comments amount to this: the Stoics know they disagree with Aristotle, and yet the position they attribute to Aristotle is one in which he simply denies what the Stoics hold. The Stoics hold that one of a pair of contradictories about future events is true and the other false; in their minds, then, Aristotle must hold that neither of the contradictories is true or false. For the Stoics, Aristotle’s rejection of fatalism amounts to a rejection of a key principle of logic itself, the so-called principle of bivalence. This misconstrual of Aristotle, according to Boethius, stems from the Stoics’ claim that all things come about out of necessity, while chance, freedom, and the indeterminacy of material nature disappear. Boethius thus connects the Stoics’ non-dynamic understanding of reality to a one-dimensional notion of propositional truth: one contradictory is true, the other false, period; and one either knows which one is true or does not know, period.

In Boethius's mind, Aristotle offers a better way to understand the future as well as propositional truths about it – one that befits his non-fatalistic, dynamic understanding of reality. If truth consists in the conformity or adequation of intellect and reality, then in order to be true the intellect must be adequate also to the very dynamism of reality. Boethius captures this by saying that propositions about future contingents are indeed either true or false, but not in a definite way; thus our intellects remain in truth precisely when we are holding such propositions in an indefinite manner (i.e. as not definitely true or false). Furthermore, achieving truth about the future in this manner is our way of participating in the truth about it in the mind of God. For, as Boethius says, “God knows future things as arising, not out of necessity, but contingently, in such a way that he is not unaware that something else is able to come about” (2 *In Periherm.* 3.9, 226,9–12). Hence Boethius thinks in a multidimensional way about the future, with respect to which we have propositions that are either true or false, the possibility of an indefinite stance toward those propositions, and an infallible divine perspective that does not eradicate, but in fact establishes the contingency inherent in human freedom and material nature. Such is the discerning mode of thinking that Boethius does not find in the Stoics, who are inclined to impose distinctions and categories on reality too simplistically so as to make it more manageable.

In his commentary on Cicero's *Topics*, Boethius mentions the Stoics twice.<sup>13</sup> The second time has to do with the Stoics' notion of fate. Because it adds little to what was just said, we leave it aside here.<sup>14</sup> The first time, though, is worth exploring. It occurs when Boethius comments on a passage in which Cicero maintains that logic should treat both judgment and discovery, although the Stoics focus solely on the former. Boethius concurs with Cicero, asserting that the Stoics treat logic narrowly (*In Cic. Top.* 1.9, 1045A) compared with Aristotle's more complete treatment (*In Cic. Top.* 1.9, 1047C). Cicero is right, moreover, to point this out:

Cicero justly rebukes the Stoics especially because they leave off discovery, which is prior in nature and more powerful in use: prior in nature, because it cannot come about that a discovery be judged unless that discovery first exists; more powerful in use, because a bare discovery, expressed naturally with art set aside, is much more useful when defending a case one has undertaken than giving an unarmed and tacit judgment after having been mute while another did discovery.

(*In Cic. Top.* 1.9, 1047D)

The first of these points gets at the fact that the Stoics neglect human experience and its nuances, to which discovery is more proximate than judgment. This omission not only undercuts the intellect's progress toward truth at the knees, but also renders it practically ineffective, which is Boethius's second point. For in leaving off discovery in their logic, the Stoics fail to do the work it takes to bring someone else to see what they already see. The picture of the Stoic that Boethius draws here, therefore, is that of a distant and critical observer who expects others simply to see what he or she has seen and to draw conclusions accordingly.

In all these commentaries, therefore, Boethius's attitude toward the Stoics is basically unfavorable. At best, Stoic thinking provides a helpful foil to his own. Their logical teaching does not allow them to express adequately the intelligibility of what we experience. And inadequacies in their logic tally with inadequacies in their moral, epistemological, and metaphysical thinking. As we will see, Boethius retains his critical attitude toward Stoicism in the *Consolation*, and yet he works to make room for it in the Prisoner's intellectual

convalescence. Thus he supplements his negative evaluation of Stoicism present in earlier works by recognizing its potential contribution to one's overall philosophical growth.

### **The presence of Stoicism in the *Consolation***

In the *Consolation*, Boethius does not focus on Stoicism in its own right; he enfold it, rather, into the overall philosophical development that the Prisoner undergoes.<sup>15</sup> By embracing Stoicism as useful, Boethius enables the reader to recognize the positive aspects of Stoicism along with its limitations. In what follows, instead of attempting to identify every implicit reference to Stoicism in the *Consolation*, we attempt to sketch out the "essence of Stoicism" as Boethius sees it, especially in the first half of the work. The goal is to bring to light the twofold judgment of Stoicism at which Boethius arrives, namely, that Stoicism is partial and superficial, philosophically speaking, and yet may be indispensable in one's overall philosophical progress.

Boethius likens the Prisoner's intellectual progress in the *Consolation* to a process of healing aided by a physician's intervention. The Prisoner's first identification of Philosophy is as his "physician" or "healer" (*Cons.* 1.3, 3), although this medical motif is introduced in the work by Philosophy herself. For when Philosophy first appears, she announces: "It is time for medicine rather than complaint" (*Cons.* 1.2, 1). Philosophy carries out a diagnosis of the Prisoner by encouraging him to reveal the cause of his pain as well as his views of human nature, God, and the purpose of reality. Near the end of this exchange, the Prisoner declares that he is a "rational, mortal animal, and nothing more" (*Cons.* 1.6, 34–5), and in this Philosophy discovers the key to her diagnosis. "I now know ... the greatest cause of your sickness," she tells her patient. "You have ceased to know what you yourself are" (*Cons.* 1.6, 36–8).

Forgetfulness of one's true self is no trivial illness, and so there will be no quick cure. Philosophy decides she must treat the Prisoner in stages, which she prescribes thus:

Because a great tumult of emotions broods over you, and pain, anger, and grief draw you apart in diverse ways, you are now of a mind that stronger remedies do not yet touch you. Hence we will use gentler remedies for a short while, so that what has become hardened into a tumor while these troubles were affecting you may by a more coaxing touch become softened to receive the power of sharper medicine.

(*Cons.* 1.5, 36–9; cf. 1.6, 53–9)

The initial "gentler remedies" to which Philosophy refers are analogous to anesthesia, inasmuch as in Books 1 and 2 Philosophy numbs her patient to the apparent goods and evils of fortune. Philosophically speaking, this process consists in persuading the Prisoner toward Stoicism as a first stage in his intellectual convalescence.

To glean the "essence of Stoicism" as Boethius sees it, then, we must look to Books 1 and 2. In Book 1, Philosophy lays a psychological foundation for the Prisoner's adoption of Stoicism, while in Book 2 she brings him to embrace a Stoic worldview in a more principled manner. Along these lines, then, Boethius paints a living picture of Stoicism as it comes to be present in the Prisoner.

### **"Canine spiritedness": a psychological foundation for Stoicism**

When the *Consolation* opens, poetic Muses are tempting the Prisoner to write self-pitying dirges, and he is all too willing to comply; for he is wallowing in his sorrow. By the end of

Book 1, however, the Prisoner has escaped this self-indulgent, concupiscible attitude toward his situation and taken on a vigorous, irascible one – an attitude that, on the basis of several allusions to Plato’s *Republic*, can be aptly named “canine spiritedness.” By understanding the Prisoner’s turn toward spiritedness in light of the *Republic*, we gain insight into the foundations of Stoicism that Philosophy lays in the Prisoner’s soul.

When Philosophy arrives on the scene, she dismisses the poetic Muses who are tempting the Prisoner to write self-pitying dirges. In earlier days, she reminds him, he reaped the fruits of reason by seeking the causes of things, both in the heavens above and here below (*Cons.* 1.2m). Why has he cast aside the *arma*, the weapons, with which she equipped him in his youth (*Cons.* 1.2, 4–6)? Her mention of weapons is the first indication of the change in the Prisoner’s soul that Philosophy wants to effect, namely, to become spirited toward his situation rather than complacent. This new attitude arises in the Prisoner while he uncovers his wound to Philosophy by narrating the history of injustices that led to his imprisonment (*Cons.* 1.4). Recounting his pain sparks the Prisoner’s spiritedness, giving rise to anger. In his lengthy account, moreover, the Prisoner alludes to the *Republic* a few times, including an explicit allusion to the philosopher-king, an idea he was attempting to embody in his own political career. The standard of Plato’s philosopher-king both informs and fuels the Prisoner’s spirited narrative. In addition, upon completing his account, he remarks, “When I *barked out* these things in prolonged pain, Philosophy stood with calm countenance, moved in no way by my complaints” (*Cons.* 1.5, 1–2, emphasis added). This odd verb – *delatravi*, “I barked out” – brings to the forefront those passages in the *Republic* in which Plato employs the image of a dog to exemplify his understanding of spiritedness – passages that illuminate the current disposition of the Prisoner’s soul.

In Book 2 of the *Republic*, Socrates identifies the requisite features of the guardians of the city he is founding in speech. These guardians must be ready for war, since that is why they were introduced (see 373d–374e).<sup>16</sup> Physically, they must have sharp senses, speed, and strength; emotionally, they must have *thumos*, spiritedness, which “makes every soul fearless and invincible in the face of everything” (375b). They should not, however, exercise universal aggression; instead, “they must be gentle toward their own and cruel to enemies” (375c), a disposition found in “the disposition of noble dogs,” who are “as gentle as can be with their familiars and people they know and the opposite with those they don’t know” (375e). In this Socrates discerns an incipient philosophic trait: such a dog distinguishes people it encounters on the basis of knowledge, namely on whether it is familiar with them or not (376b). Hence guardians, who ought to possess such “canine spiritedness,” must also be lovers of learning; consequently, Socrates hastily infers, they must be philosophic (376b–c).

The Prisoner’s self-justifying narrative is driven by this sort of canine spiritedness. He does not lash out at the world in general; no, he narrows his scope and mounts a self-defense, a defense of his life, his actions, his principles. Such spiritedness, if it stays on the level of the emotions, often bears bad fruit, and so Philosophy does not receive the Prisoner’s spirited account too sympathetically. Indeed, as the Prisoner tells us, “When I had barked out these things in prolonged pain, Philosophy stood with calm countenance, moved in no way by my complaints” (*Cons.* 1.5, 1–2). Yet Philosophy wants to put the Prisoner’s thumotic disposition to good use. The Prisoner is now reinvigorated. He is defending himself and his actions, attaching himself to what is his own and hostile toward all that is alien. Indeed, there are elements of rational discernment in his making such distinctions. Philosophy sees the canine spiritedness in him as dispositive toward a deeper healing. Hence in Book 2 she expands his canine spiritedness to a rational level, transmuting it into an intellectual and volitional stance toward all reality that can rightly be called Stoic.

### Stoicism: anesthetic to apparent goods and evils

Philosophy draws on the Prisoner's canine spiritedness in bringing him toward Stoicism. By means of argumentation, she universalizes the realm of otherness to include everything that can be encountered intellectually, thereby sublimating emotional hostility into volitional apathy. Canine spiritedness provides a pattern on the emotional level that can be recapitulated on the rational level as a "worldview," an approach to reality in general. This worldview consists of three principles at the heart of Stoicism as Boethius sees it: first, human nature is powerless and possessionless in a world characterized by fortune; second, the goodness or badness of each thing that comes from fortune consists in its being deemed to be such; and third, nothing that comes from fortune should be thought to be intrinsically good. These principles correspond with three features traditionally associated with the Stoic: *ataraxia* (an emotionally untroubled state), *apatheia* (an untouchable objectivity), and *autarchia* (self-sufficiency). By administering the anesthesia of Stoicism to the Prisoner – first on the level of the emotions, then on the level of opinion, and finally on the level of reason – Philosophy progressively numbs him to all that the world has to offer. Thereby the Prisoner acquires an untroubled, untouchable objectivity that allows him to be self-sufficient in the face of his apparently unhappy situation.

Philosophy first causes the Prisoner to feel powerless and possessionless in a world characterized by fortune. She does so by personifying *fortuna*, fortune, a female prodigy whose many disguises Philosophy understands (*Cons.* 2.1, 5–6).<sup>17</sup> Fortune has not changed her nature in the Prisoner's case. "Rather," Philosophy tells him, "regarding you she has preserved her own constancy in her very mutability" (*Cons.* 2.1, 29–30). Because the Prisoner willingly enjoyed the things of fortune previously, he has no right now to complain of bad fortune. "You have given yourself to be ruled by fortune; you must comply with the customs of the lady," Philosophy asserts. "Indeed, do you endeavor to hold back the impetus of the turning wheel? Yet, you dullest of all mortals, if it begins to stand still, fortune ceases to be" (*Cons.* 2.1, 55–9). The Prisoner himself has defined the human being by mortality, thus binding human existence essentially to the wheel of generation and corruption – and yet he expects a mode of existence more stable than the coming-to-be and passing-away of mortal things? Did not he, like all of us, come forth naked from his mother's womb? Indeed, if there be any necessary aspects of human existence, dependency and poverty are among them. Raising no objections to Philosophy's case, the Prisoner implicitly grants that all the things of fortune are in fact other and not his own.

Philosophy tells the Prisoner that her words are "poultices" or "compresses" intended to ease his pain (*Cons.* 2.3, 9–11). The Prisoner is in fact temporarily assuaged, having taken pleasure in the sweetness of Philosophy's rhetoric. Philosophy's compresses are effective – but only superficially, since she appeals to the Prisoner primarily on the level of emotion. Yet this serves Philosophy's purposes, for it pushes the Prisoner inward. As he acknowledges, "For the wretched there is a deeper sense of evils, and so when these [words] cease to sound, inner grief weighs down the soul" (*Cons.* 2.3, 7–9). This numbness, however, is not enduring. It has not yet reached the rational level of the soul as a form of intellectual and volitional apathy. That requires a more penetrating anesthetic.

Before achieving rational numbness, though, the Prisoner requires treatment on the level of opinion; for, as Philosophy tells him, "That you suffer the punishment of false opinion, you cannot rightly impute to things" (*Cons.* 2.4, 6–7). His false opinion consists in the empty names that he gives to things, especially the name "fortunate happiness" that moves him. This name is empty because it lacks a referent that is whole, unified, and enduring. "Who is possessed of a happiness so composed that he does not dispute with the quality of his state

from some side?” Philosophy asks. “For the condition of human goods is an anxious thing that never comes about as a whole and never survives as everlasting” (*Cons.* 2.4, 38–41). The best one can achieve in this life, then, is happiness that is partial and passing. “Therefore,” Philosophy asserts, “no one easily accords with the condition of his fortune; for there is present in each case something that the inexperienced do not know and at which the experienced shudder” (*Cons.* 2.4, 48–50). If one truly expects more from fortune, and at the same time grasps the anxious condition of fortune’s goods, fear alone can result.

Quelling such fear requires thinking and naming realities correctly, considering them with utter objectivity not swayed by how one is affected by them. This means forming the opinion that “nothing is miserable except when you deem it so, and, conversely, every lot is blessed by the equanimity of the one who tolerates it” (*Cons.* 2.4, 58–9). Hence the goodness or badness of each thing that comes from fortune consists in its being deemed to be good or bad. Philosophy impresses this opinion upon the Prisoner by correcting how he names the things of fortune, since his appraisal of their value is governed by this naming. The numbing effect of this new opinion improves upon the fleeting emotional numbness to the things of fortune achieved earlier. It affects a deeper capacity of his soul, the one that connects his sense experience of reality to names.

When in possession of this opinion, the Prisoner can apprehend each reality he encounters objectively so as not to be touched by it. Yet possession of this opinion remains insecure until it is buttressed by cogent argumentation. Hence Philosophy endeavors to numb the Prisoner to the things of fortune on a rational level. She does so by offering demonstrations that nothing coming from fortune should be thought to be intrinsically good. This knowledge in the Prisoner enables him to stand apart from reality, self-sufficient in an act of objectifying, neutralizing thought.

Philosophy first gives specific arguments concerning riches, beauty, honors, power, and the rest, that none of these should be deemed good in itself. She concludes by offering a general argument that recapitulates the basic structure common to each of the specific ones, which runs thus:

Now neither are riches able to extinguish insatiable avarice, nor does power make a man in control of himself whom vicious desires hold tightly with chains that cannot be loosened; and dignity conferred on the shameless does not make them dignified, but rather prolongs them as undignified and shows them to be such. Why does it come about thus? Because you rejoice to call things that stand otherwise by false names, which are easily refuted by the effect of the things themselves. And so neither those riches nor that power nor that dignity can be rightly called such. In the end, concerning all of fortune from which nothing is to be sought, one may conclude this: it is manifest that nothing of native goodness is present in it, since it does not always join itself to good things and does not make good those to whom it has been joined.

(*Cons.* 2.6, 56–9)<sup>18</sup>

Through this argument Philosophy reaches a universal conclusion by reasoning from principles. In fact, the structure of Philosophy’s argument is easy to spell out in the form of a Barbara syllogism:

All things that do not always make good those to whom they are joined have nothing of native goodness.

All things of fortune do not always make good those to whom they are joined.

Therefore, all things of fortune have nothing of native goodness.

Through such argumentation, then, Philosophy reaches the rational level of the Prisoner's soul and makes him numb to all that comes from fortune.

Notice, however, that Philosophy's argument never transcends its logical dimensions. The conclusion she reaches – that all things of fortune have nothing of native goodness – derives from the universalizing capacity of thought itself. Indeed, if a thing is good or bad only inasmuch as it is deemed to be such, then isn't the right conclusion not that the things of fortune are not intrinsically good, but that the things of fortune should not be *thought* to be intrinsically good? Philosophy might respond that she does offer a reason grounded more in reality than in thought alone; for she says that calling something good is shown to be false by the effect of the thing itself. But what is the criterion for not calling something good? The criterion Philosophy offers is that of strict universality: a thing of fortune is good if and only if it *always* makes good that to which it is joined. Lacking such universal beneficiality, a thing of fortune must be intrinsically indifferent. Philosophy's conclusion ultimately derives, then, neither from actual moral experience of the things of fortune nor from metaphysical insight into the nature of these realities, but from the universalizing capacity of thought itself.

In Book 2, then, Philosophy helps the Prisoner achieve an untroubled, untouchable condition of objectivity – a condition very similar to that of a Stoic sage. Perched at a distance, he is a self-sufficient measurer of the realities he encounters, able to neutralize them by thinking them indifferent.<sup>19</sup> Yet Philosophy holds the Prisoner back from full-fledged Stoicism. For the Prisoner's friends – which appear to be the greatest of external goods, according to Aristotle<sup>20</sup> – do not fall into the realm of otherness to which Boethius is anesthetized. Philosophy carves out a place for the Prisoner's wife in particular: "She lives, I say, and preserves her breath for you alone, though hating this life, and in this one thing even I concede that your happiness is diminished: that she melts in tears with desire and pain" (*Cons.* 2.4, 19–22). Since Philosophy admits that the Prisoner's happiness should be diminished by his wife's suffering, her suffering must be something intrinsically bad and not just bad because he deems it such. This implies in turn, of course, that his wife's well-being is intrinsically good and not just good because the Prisoner deems it such.

The exceptional character of friendship comes to the foreground again at the end of Book 2 – and, not coincidentally, it is when Philosophy first includes the notion of wonder in her treatment of the Prisoner. "I am eager to say something *wonderful*," she tells him, "and for that reason I am scarcely able to unfold its meaning in words. For I reckon that adverse fortune is more profitable to human beings than prosperous fortune" (*Cons.* 2.8, 5–8, emphasis added). On the surface, the wonder here – that something adverse is more beneficial than something prosperous – seems to lie in its apparent unreasonableness, or at least in its paradoxical character. Probing more deeply, however, Philosophy reveals the real source of wonder behind this, namely, the ultimate reason why adverse fortune is more beneficial: "In the end, happy fortune draws men out of the way by enticements, but adverse fortune often draws them back by a hook to return to true goods" (*Cons.* 2, 8.15–17). How does adverse fortune do this? It does it by revealing who one's true friends are; it does so, in other words, by allowing one to recognize the intrinsic goodness of a friend. Thereby one is drawn out of the neutralized realm of worldly things in order to recognize and appreciate true goods: other persons with whom one is friends. The Prisoner's experience of friendship, then, invites him to surpass the Stoic attitude he had achieved by beginning to wonder at something *intrinsically* good and not good simply because he deems it such.

Friendship, therefore, is a human phenomenon that implodes the dividing barrier between what is one's own and what is other; for the friend is an other who is another self. This wonderful reality touches Boethius's intelligence. It allows him to see that the self – the



allegedly self-enclosed, self-sufficient self on which he has been focused – actually extends beyond itself and joins with what is other. Thus the self exists in actual communion with another, the friend. Fittingly, then, Philosophy concludes Book 2 with a poem extolling *amor*, love, which holds things together, ruling the earth, the sea, and the heavens, and uniting by sacred bonds those men and women who are open to its impulses (*Cons.* 2.8m). Ultimately *amor* – love, *erôs* – energizes Boethius to surpass Stoicism by wondering at and appreciating philosophically the intrinsic, self-diffusive goodness of reality, beginning with those others who are other selves.

### **Stoicism: thinking within the horizon of “a rational, mortal animal, and nothing more”**

When Philosophy carries out her diagnosis of the Prisoner in Book 1 of the *Consolation*, she ascertains the “greatest cause” of his sickness: he has ceased to know what he is. She determines this immediately after the Prisoner asserts that he is “a rational, mortal animal, and nothing more.” Like a good physician (and teacher), Philosophy must begin where her patient (and student) is; she must begin to restore his intellectual health, in other words, from within the parameters of his own self-understanding. And, in fact, this is precisely what Philosophy does during the first stage of her treatment by drawing the Prisoner out of a debilitating self-pity toward a confident self-sufficiency. Her labors result, moreover, in the Prisoner’s appropriation of Stoicism. From the details, then, we can gather the following about the essence of Stoicism as presented in the *Consolation*: Stoicism is the worldview at which one arrives when thinking philosophically within the parameters of one’s self-understanding as “a rational, mortal animal, and nothing more.”

This account of Stoicism brings into focus the achievement that Stoicism is, in Boethius’s eyes, as well as its inherent limitations. Within the self-limiting horizon of “a rational, mortal animal, and nothing more,” human beings exercise rationality (the basis of their *differentia specifica*) within the space delineated by their animality (the basis of their *genus*). Put more loosely, when exercising rationality within these parameters, a human being looks “downward and inward,” not “upward and outward,” with the aim of achieving as much as possible a self-established, untroubled management of the things one encounters in the world. One achieves this chiefly by retreating within and erecting ramparts, as it were, thereby defending oneself from all that is “other” and neutralizing it, because any reality that one encounters – or, put in the terms of the *Consolation*, each thing of fortune – carries within itself the capacity to disturb one’s inner peace and thus to put into question one’s self-sufficiency. Understood along these lines, then, Stoicism is the philosophic expression of thinking that takes place within such parameters and in such a mode, and this is what Stoicism can achieve, as Boethius sees it.

Appending “and nothing more” to his self-definition, however, indicates the Prisoner’s closed-mindedness and, in turn, suggests the inherent limitations of Stoicism. In light of what transpires later in the *Consolation*, moreover, this self-imposed limit on reason’s interests and speculative capacity reveals itself to be at the core of the Prisoner’s problematic self-understanding. Can reason transcend the limits of the corporeal world and perhaps even relate to a divinity who is not defined necessarily in relation to that world? And, if so, what self-understanding provides the adequate horizon for actualizing the full range of reason? Simply raising these questions takes us beyond the Stoic outlook that the Prisoner achieves through Philosophy’s initial “gentler remedies.” In fact, these questions point us toward the “stronger medicines” that Philosophy administers to her patient in the latter half of the

*Consolation*. By means of this more penetrating treatment, the Prisoner is led by wonder, on the one hand, to affirm the intrinsic goodness of reality and, on the other, to recognize his own capacity to participate in a divine mode of existing and knowing. In other words, in addition to thinking within the parameters of rational animality, the Prisoner is invited to think within the parameters of a being who is potentially divine by participation. Thereby the Prisoner is enabled to achieve a genuinely metaphysical outlook, one that allows him to see beyond his own self-interest and glimpse his life in the light of God's ever-present providential causality. Stoicism, as Boethius understands it, could never attain such a perspective.

The Prisoner's problems remain with us. We still question the meaning of our lives as well as the way in which the injustices we have suffered shape our fate. In doing so, Boethius suggests to us in the *Consolation*, we may do well initially to retreat within, to exercise reason "objectively," to "neutralize" all that we encounter, and thereby to take a stand, unfazed and self-sufficient, over against reality. We would do well, in other words, to become Stoic. Indeed, in human terms, it would be difficult to describe more precisely the ambitions of reason exercised also in the empirical-scientific mode, the mode most readily accepted today as proper to reason and the one that not a few philosophers endeavor to imitate as closely as possible. But the *Consolation* also suggests that Stoicism is ultimately impoverished; for, as Boethius sees it, Stoicism is unopen to wonder at what is other and incapable of making sense of the phenomena of human friendship and love.<sup>21</sup> In the *Consolation*, then, the Stoic mode of thinking is surpassed in order to address adequately the all-too-human condition in which we rational animals find ourselves – and in order to explore the possibility of metaphysical insight into the nature of reality and its divine cause. Perhaps we would do well, then, to take seriously Philosophy's teaching in the first half of the *Consolation* both by embracing the achievement that Stoicism was and can continue to be and by surpassing this mode of a purely objectifying reason through the affirmation of the intrinsic goodness of the realities we encounter, especially other persons. Doing so could put us on a path toward the convalescence of reason that the Prisoner apparently needed as he sat in his prison cell, the same sort that may be required of us in order to overcome our own modes of philosophical self-imprisonment.

## Notes

- 1 For Boethius's announcement of this project, see 2 *In Periherm.* 2.3, 79,9–80,9. Boethius was in fact very productive as a translator and commentator. "What Boethius finally accomplished was much less, but in certain ways also more, than this very ambitious plan. Boethius almost certainly translated all Aristotle's logical works (though the translation of the *Posterior Analytics* did not survive into the Middle Ages) and Porphyry's *Isagoge*. He did not, however, translate any other Aristotle or any works by Plato" (Marenbon 2003: 18). Citations of Boethius's works, both in-text and in the notes, are abbreviated as follows: *Cons.*, *De consolatione philosophiae*; *In Cat.*, *In Categorias Aristotelis commentaria*; *In Cic. Top.*, *In Ciceronis Topica*; 2 *In Periherm.*, *In librum Aristotelis Perihermeneias commentariorum editio secunda*; 1 *In Isag.*, *In Isagogen Porphyrii commentorum editio prima*; 2 *In Isag.*, *In Isagogen Porphyrii commentorum editio secunda*. Citations will include the section, page numbers, and line numbers (if available) from the edition being used (see Boethius 1847a, 1847b, 1880, 1906a, 1906b, 2001). All translations of Boethius's texts are mine.
- 2 Indeed, in light of these passages, we can see why one might arrive at the judgment that in Boethius's eyes "the Stoics ... in general are considered to be pseudo-philosophers" (Marenbon 2003: 154).
- 3 Each of these Romans, like Boethius, suffered under the reigning authority: Canius was executed by Caligula; Seneca was forced to commit suicide by Nero; and Soranus was condemned to death by Nero and committed suicide. Canius is mentioned again at 1.4, 9; Seneca, at 3.5, 28–36. Soranus is not mentioned again.
- 4 Colish articulates the following as a way to understand Boethius's appropriation of the Stoic tradition in the earlier works: "Boethius tends to appropriate and to apply the Stoic doctrines that interest him

in the light of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic teachings. At the same time, and while this practice is often unacknowledged by Boethius it is a critical feature of his importance as a transmitter, he occasionally Stoicizes in significant ways his treatment of the philosophers to which he gives his primary allegiance” (Colish 1985: 267). (For a similar articulation, see Marenbon 2003: 65.) Colish’s idea that Boethius “Stoicizes” his treatment of the philosophers adds an intentionality that was likely absent from Boethius’s mind. Suto’s attempt to summarize how the Stoics make their way into Boethius’s thinking and writing seems more accurate: “Even though he denounces the Stoics, as well as the Epicureans, for what he sees as serious mistakes on their part, he does, however, employ quite a few terms of Stoic provenance. He perhaps uses many of these terms without knowing that they came from the Stoics, since his only direct source of the Stoics is probably the works of Seneca. However, indirect sources include the Greek Aristotelian commentators and some Latin writers, especially Cicero. These authors had already incorporated Stoic notions into their writings without mentioning their roots” (Suto 2012: 232). See Suto 2012: 231–3 for many of the Stoic terms and notions that likely made their way into Boethius’s thinking in this manner.

- 5 Boethius wrote a commentary on the *Categories*, translated and wrote two commentaries on *On Interpretation*, and translated and wrote two commentaries on the *Isagoge*. It is thought, moreover, that he translated all of Aristotle’s logical works. In addition, he commented on Cicero’s *Topics* and wrote treatises concerning a variety of logical issues. For an overview of the scope of Boethius’s logical works, see Barnes 1981: *passim*, as well as Chadwick 1981: 108–73. Boethius also wrote theological treatises, but there is nothing in them that bears in any important way on his stance toward Stoicism. As Colish puts it, “From the standpoint of the Stoic tradition [Boethius’s] theological treatises and his translations of the Greek authorities on arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music can be disregarded. None of these works shows any trace of Stoicism. It is, rather, to Boethius’s logical commentaries and his *Consolation* that we must look for his understanding and use of Stoicism” (Colish 1985: 268).
- 6 “Boethius knew Stoic logic, but he did not think to expound it. Indeed, he is generally dismissive of Stoic views; when his sources discuss Stoic doctrine, he often decides to pass it by ... We may regret the omission; but Boethius’s decision was, in its context, a sensible one” (Barnes 1981: 83). Colish, for one, disagrees with the way Barnes puts this, asserting that Barnes “argues unpersuasively that Boethius was completely dismissive of Stoic logic” (Colish 1985: 269 n. 64).
- 7 The first edition of Boethius’s commentary on the *Isagoge* was based on a Latin translation done by Marius Victorinus, which is not extant. Dissatisfied with Victorinus’s rendering, Boethius translated the *Isagoge* himself and did a second edition of commentary.
- 8 In the first edition, Boethius sees himself as following Porphyry’s lead in setting aside the Stoics. In the opening lines of the *Isagoge* Porphyry says he is presenting the Peripatetic account of genus, species, and the like. Boethius remarks that in saying this Porphyry is setting aside the Stoics, despite the fact that the Stoics endeavored to treat these same matters. See 1 *In Isag.* 1.10, 10–12. Hence the Stoics are never mentioned again in this edition of the commentary. In the second edition, the Stoics come up by way of a passage from Cicero’s *Topics*, which Boethius quotes favorably. Cicero points out a deficiency in the Stoics’ approach to logic compared with Aristotle’s, namely, that the Stoics elaborate solely on the part of logic that deals with judgment (*dialektikê* or *viae iudicandi*) and leave behind the part that deals with discovery (*topikê* or *ars inveniendi*), even though the latter is of greater use and prior in the order of nature. See 2 *In Isag.* 1.2, 10–12; see also Marenbon 2003: 58. Through Cicero, then, Boethius suggests that the Stoics do not dig deeply enough in their logical teaching. Their logic is one-dimensional, focusing only on the ways of judgment and ignoring the art of discovering – a point to which we return later when we consider *In Cic. Top.*
- 9 We will go through these works in chronological order. On the order of Boethius’s works, see especially De Rijk 1964; also, Suto 2012: xix.
- 10 Colish is critical of Boethius in this regard when she makes the following summary statement: “In his first two sets of logical commentaries [i.e. on the *Isagoge* and the *Categories*], then, Boethius adduces the Stoics only to criticize them, and on points not always pertinent to Stoic logic. The most telling note ... is his attack on the Stoic understanding of vice and virtue, not on the grounds of its psychological implausibility but because of its failure to square with the logical relations he posits between affirmation and negation” (Colish 1985: 270). As I hope both to have shown previously (Walz 2011) and to show in this paragraph, I think more is at work when Boethius refers to the Stoics in these two editions of commentary.
- 11 An adequate answer would compel us to inquire into the sort of work the *Categories* is and why Boethius’s apparent tangent fits well within a commentary on this work more so than one on some

- other work in the *Organon*. Boethius is very attentive to such nuances in Aristotle's works, but spelling this out would take us too far afield at this point.
- 12 Boethius wrote two editions of commentary on *On Interpretation*. The first is shorter and focuses on giving a step-by-step account of the work. The second is longer and delves much more into the details of the work and various interpretations of the text.
  - 13 For a more detailed account of how Boethius's *In Cic. Top.* contributes to our understanding of Stoic logic, see Stump 1987.
  - 14 This takes place at *In Cic. Top.* 5, 1146C–D, where Boethius simply lays out Cicero's understanding of the Stoic account of fate.
  - 15 For a more particular comparison between the *Consolation* and a Stoic text, namely, Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*, see Relihan 2007: 69–74.
  - 16 References to the *Republic* are based on Plato 1968. Stephanus numbers from that edition will be cited.
  - 17 For a detailed account of the notion of *fortuna* in the *Consolation*, see Frakes 1988: 30–3.
  - 18 Philosophy's argument here mirrors the classical presentation of the Stoics' argument in Diog. Laert. 7.103: "For just as heating, not chilling, is the peculiar characteristic of what is hot, so too benefiting, not harming, is the peculiar characteristic of what is good. But wealth and health no more do benefit than they harm. Therefore wealth and health are not something good. Furthermore they say: that which can be used well and badly is not something good. But wealth and health can be used well and badly. Therefore wealth and health are not something good" (LS: 354, 58A). Furthermore, the Stoics' argument appears to find its roots in Plato's *Euthydemus* (278e–281e).
  - 19 A fruitful comparison can be made between Boethius's presentation of Stoicism in the *Consolation* and the following account of Stoicism from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "In thinking I am free, because I am not in an *other*, but remain simply and solely in communion with myself, and the object, which is for me the *essential* being, is in undivided unity my being-for-myself; and my activity in conceptual thinking is a movement within myself ... This freedom of self-consciousness when it appeared as a conscious manifestation in the history of Spirit has, as we know, been called Stoicism. Its principle is that consciousness is a being that *thinks*, and that consciousness holds something to be essentially important, or true and good only in so far as it *thinks* it to be such ... What alone has importance is the difference posited by *thought*, or the difference which from the very first is not distinct from myself ... [W]hether on the throne or in chains, in the utter dependence of its individual existence, its aim is to be free, and to maintain that lifeless indifference which steadfastly withdraws from the bustle of existence, alike from being active as passive, into the simple essentiality of thought ... Freedom in thought has only *pure thought* as its truth, a truth lacking the fullness of life. Hence freedom in thought, too, is only the Notion of freedom, not the living reality of freedom itself ... To the question: *What* is good and true, it again gave for answer the contentless thought: The True and the Good shall consist in reasonableness. But this self-identity of thought is again only the pure form in which nothing is determined" (Hegel 1977: 120–2).
  - 20 "But it seems absurd, when people assign all good things to the happy person, not to grant him friends, which seem to be the greatest of external goods" (Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 9.9, 1169b8–10; trans. Aristotle 2002: 174–5).
  - 21 For an account of how one might make sense of the phenomena of love and friendship from a Stoic perspective, see Stephens 1996.

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# 6

## STOIC THEMES IN PETER ABELARD AND JOHN OF SALISBURY

*Kevin Guilfooy*

The Stoic influence on Peter Abelard and John of Salisbury is vast, but identifying specifics is difficult. There are many reasons for this: foremost is the diversity of views that fall under the banner of Stoicism. Vaguely Stoic themes are ubiquitous throughout the twelfth century. Second, it is unclear what sources Abelard and Salisbury had access to. The frequency of florilegia and excerpts means it is at least possible that Abelard and Salisbury were not aware of all views expressed even in works they cite. Much of the influence is second hand. Many Stoic views were quite easily adopted by patristic thinkers who passed the views on now as part of the Christian heritage. Lastly, especially in the case of logic, there is always the possibility of reinvention.

Current and past scholarly opinion about Stoic influence is mixed. Scholars taking a broad view of twelfth-century intellectual culture have written that Abelard “lived in imagination in the world of classical Stoic philosophy intensely felt and brilliantly expressed” (Brooke 1969: 50). More philosophically minded scholars are confident that there is Stoic influence. However, direct influence of Hellenistic Stoic thought has not been demonstrated. The extensive Stoic influence on Abelard’s ethics is undeniable. In logic the influence is unclear and probably indirect, but the similarity to Stoic logic is striking. For Salisbury the story is different. He claims to be an Academic Skeptic. Stoicism and Epicureanism are set up as foils for his own moderate Academic theories. Salisbury does not develop Stoic themes in any new or interesting way. Instead he presents a picture twelfth-century philosophers believed to be Stoicism.

### **Abelard**

Abelard’s two main ethical works present and develop several Stoic themes. The *Collationes* (*Coll.*), also known as *Dialogues between a Philosopher, a Jew and Christian*, develop an account of virtue that is rooted in Stoicism, and an account of happiness that is a response to what Abelard saw as shortcomings of the Stoic view of human happiness. In his *Ethics* (*Eth.*) Abelard develops an internalist ethics centered on a theory of consent to intention that is a clear development of the Stoic idea of assent, as found in Seneca.<sup>1</sup>

The *Dialogues* offer the most obvious of Abelard’s development of Stoic themes. In these imaginary conversations a Philosopher and Jew and a Christian have been debating the nature

of happiness and the path to man's greatest good. The three come to Abelard and ask him to judge the winner of their debate. The text contains the debate between the Philosopher and the Jew, and another between the Philosopher and the Christian. Abelard's final judgement was never written, and it is unclear whether Abelard ever intended to write one. Each character in the dialogue expresses views that Abelard endorses elsewhere and views that he rejects. None can be identified wholly as Abelard's "Socrates."

Of the three characters, it is the Philosopher who is the principal exponent of Stoic ideas. The Philosopher identifies himself as a circumcised descendant of Ishmael. In the twelfth century this could only mean that he is a Muslim raised in an Islamic country. Abelard had a limited understanding of Islam. The philosopher offers nothing uniquely or even stereotypically Muslim. Rather, Abelard felt that Islamic society was more intellectually tolerant than Christian Europe (Marenbon and Orlandi 2001: li). The Philosopher comes from a land where he would have been freer to be a non-religious adherent of classical philosophy. He offers many clearly identifiable Stoic views. Natural law is a rational ordering of the universe: it is not merely a standard of justice against which promulgated law is judged, all promulgated law – human and revealed – derives from and is contained in the natural law (*Coll.* §133). The Philosopher argues that virtue is the only path to happiness, and goes on to claim that happiness is attainable in this life (§§80–4). He argues for the unity of the virtues and that there are no degrees to the virtues (§98). He cites Seneca as the greatest moralist, and Cato as a moral exemplar (§131). In political philosophy he emphasizes the common good described as expanding the sphere of unity and fellow feeling between people.

However the Philosopher also embodies Abelard's ambivalence toward strictly secular philosophy. In his *Theologia Christiana* (*Th. Chr.*) Abelard argued that virtuous pagans had found love of God and merited salvation through the study of the natural law (*Th. Chr.* 2.21 seq.). In the Christian era, philosophers had lost their way. Seneca for example claims "I do not obey God, I agree with him" (*Ep.* 96.2). Agreement with God is not love of God. Similarly, the Philosopher holds austere or secular views that Abelard himself argues show an insufficient love of God.<sup>2</sup> The Philosopher argues that pity and grief are weaknesses and vices (*Coll.* §128). Abelard recognizes them as to some degree irrational, both reflecting an inability to accept God's will. Nonetheless, Abelard sees them as human manifestations of love (*Sen.* 94.195). Abelard's rejection of these, and other Stoic claims below, reflects his judgement that the Stoicism presented in Seneca and Cicero is secular and limited.

Abelard's Christian develops the Philosopher's arguments. Although he cannot be identified with Abelard, there are good reasons to take much of the Christian's view as Abelard's own. However, to the extent that they are variations on Stoic themes, the precise delineation of Abelard's own views is not directly relevant in the present context.

### **Natural law**

In the *Dialogues* the Philosopher identifies himself as an adherent of natural law. Natural law is universal, known to all men by reason (*Coll.* §133). Drawing on Seneca and Cicero (esp. *De inventione* 2.160–2), there are uniquely Stoic elements to his account of natural law. The Philosopher claims the natural law is a code of laws, not a standard against which posited law is judged. All positive law is a derived subset of the natural law. Understanding and following natural law is thus sufficient for virtue and happiness. Revealed law – the old law followed by the Jew, and the new law of the gospels – are mere derivations from the natural law. They add nothing necessary for virtue or happiness (*Th. Chr.* 2.48). Obviously, this is not Abelard's view, but it is close. Neither the Jew nor the Christian refute this claim. It is striking that the

Christian seems to accept that the law of the gospels, particularly the precept to 'love God and neighbor, is in fact contained in the natural law. This view is found in Abelard's other writings as well. In his commentary on Romans (*ad* 2:13) he claims that the golden rule is found in the natural law. But it is in Book 2 of the *Theologia Christiana* that the view gets its fullest expression. There Abelard writes that not only philosophers but secular and illiterate men who love the natural law are virtuous (*Th. Chr.* 2.24). He concludes that love of natural law saved the virtuous pagans because "[i]f we carefully consider the precepts of the evangelists, there is nothing which the philosophers did not follow" (*Th. Chr.* 2.43–4).

As stated, this looks like Pelagianism. The ancient philosophers had earned salvation by the use of natural reason, before Christ's atonement, and without divine grace. Abelard's account of grace and the atonement are complicated and well beyond the scope of this chapter. Nonetheless his commitment to a Stoic-influenced understanding of natural law set the parameters for his theorizing on these subjects (see Williams 2004). Abelard's account has a potential path through this difficulty.<sup>3</sup> In a few texts Abelard suggests that if a virtuous pagan truly loves the natural law, then God could reveal the knowledge necessary for salvation. Given Abelard's claim that there is nothing in revealed law that is not in natural law this implies a limitation on the human ability to fully understand the natural law, a limitation overcome in the example of Christ's sacrifice. This allows Abelard to maintain that the atonement was exemplary, not transactional, and to explain how the virtuous pagans were saved.

### ***Virtue***

The Philosopher argues that virtue is the only path to happiness, man's highest good (*Coll.* §80). Happiness is the reward for virtue and is attainable in this life. He argues for the unity of the virtues and for the lack of degrees of virtue (§98). The Philosopher's view is austere, very rational, and emotionally detached. It is consistent with the stereotype of the unemotional Stoic that persists even to the present. Abelard's Christian accepts the unity of the virtues. This is Abelard's own view as he has a unique contribution to this discussion. The Christian rejects the lack of degree of virtue, also Abelard's own view. The Christian then modifies the claims about virtue being the path to happiness. The Christian's arguments are confusing. If the dialogues are unfinished this is where Abelard is likely to have developed a clearer view. To speculate only a little, love is the missing element from the Philosopher's view. Philosophers of the Christian era had lost sight of precisely the element of natural law that the New Law "reveals," love.

The Christian does not pull all the threads of Abelard's ethics together. Nonetheless, for the Christian, and for Abelard, there is a connection between justice the chief virtue, and love as commanded by natural law. It seems Abelard wanted to combine two Stoic views: the unity of the virtues in justice and the love of God and neighbor that is commanded by natural law. But he wanted to reject the Stoic view that virtue is sufficient for happiness and happiness is attainable in this life. His success in doing this would depend on his ability to account for the atonement and to leave a place for salvific grace.

The Christian's starting point is the rejection of the Stoic claim there are no degrees of virtue. The Philosopher quotes arguments from Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (3.21) and *De officiis* (2.34–5), the latter at length (*Coll.* §98). He then adds that the only reason people think there are degrees of virtue is because humans judge based on actions and consequences, not intentions. The consequences of some actions are more damaging, but the Philosopher claims that wrong intention behind different acts is equally wrong in showing scorn for God (§§98–9). Abelard, in other writings, and his Christian, in the dialogue, dismiss the view (*Eth.* 74,7 seq.; *Coll.* §99). Even so, the Christian goes on to offer a counter-argument. He



deconstructs the Stoic sophism “no one is more virtuous than the virtuous man” (Cicero, *Parad.* 3.21), pointing out that Cicero is merely quoting the sophism to show other people’s bad ideas (§§101–2). The Christian counters the Philosopher’s argument about acts by claiming that people have different degrees of love or charity, and so have different degrees of scorn (§100). This is the first step in the Christian’s argument about happiness and highest good. These varying degrees of love (or scorn) are rewarded with varying degrees of happiness (or suffering) in the afterlife.

The Philosopher and the Christian next discuss the unity of the virtues. The Philosopher quotes Cicero’s *De officiis* (2.34–5), and the view is also found in Seneca. In these sources, which Abelard clearly used, Cicero argues that each virtue is aimed at a different end but is unified in some way in the virtuous person. Seneca is vaguer, but also more traditionally Stoic: the virtuous person has all the virtues completely; the vicious person has all the vices completely (*Ben.* 5.15.1). The Philosopher’s account of the unity of the virtues is accepted by the Christian.

In the Philosopher’s account the four virtues – prudence, courage, temperance, and justice – are reduced to the single virtue, justice. Strictly speaking, prudence is not a virtue at all (*Coll.* §117). Prudence is the ability to know right from wrong, a skill needed by the good and the wicked. Wrongdoing requires that something be identified as wrong or sinful and be chosen anyway. Seneca had offered a more traditionally Stoic definition of prudence. Prudence is the virtue that lets us identify, apprehend, or understand what is right. This prudential apprehension of what is right “leads the soul to a point that it cannot be moved except towards what is right” (*Ep.* 94). Seneca’s account makes wrongdoing an intellectual rather than a moral failing. The Philosopher disagrees.

The Philosopher then adopts Cicero’s definition of justice with its emphasis on the Stoic appeal to the common good. Justice is to give each his due (*dignitem*) while preserving the common good. He describes justice as a will (*volentas*). But our will can be weak: “The good willing which is called Justice sometimes disappears because of fear or desire. For this reason courage – to resist fear – and temperance – to resist desire – are necessary” (*Coll.* § 120). Strictly speaking courage and temperance are potencies (*potentie*) not virtues. Prudence, courage, and temperance are not independent virtues, they are ordered to the virtue of justice. Prudence gives the virtuous person the knowledge of what is just. Courage and temperance give the strength to consent to it. This is considerably different from the view found in Cicero and Seneca. In their accounts, the virtues are all found in the virtuous person but each has a different object. The virtues are character traits that are differentiated in acts.

The definition of justice also has a Stoic influence. The second clause in the definition of justice: “consistent with the common good” is emphasized by the Philosopher. The exemplar the Philosopher uses as the role model for the virtue of justice is the Stoic sage Cato the Younger. In explaining why, the Philosopher says of Cato “[t]he person who fulfills his own desires is weak of nature, the person who is concerned with what fulfills the desires of others is outstanding in virtue” (*Coll.* §131). Like the sage, God also selflessly orders the universe “governing the whole fabric of the world as one great republic” (*ibid.*). Abelard, on the other hand, writes that God acts for his own glory as the highest possible end. Love of neighbor – the common good advocated by the Philosopher – is not an end in itself but a way of showing love for God (see Marenbon 1997: 308).

### ***The highest good***

The point of the *Dialogues* is to establish the highest good and the path to attaining it. This is where the Philosopher most clearly advocates Stoic views, while the Christian is more clearly

rejecting these and developing others. The Christian's view is closer to those expressed in Abelard's other writings, but it is not a wholesale rejection of the Philosopher's Stoicism. Abelard would have been comfortable calling his own view a corrected Stoicism.

The Philosopher's position is marked by its this-worldly focus. Virtue is the only path to happiness, man's highest good. Happiness is attainable in this life. The Philosopher's account begins with a truly odd bit of scholarship. Abelard's Philosopher equates Seneca's account of happiness, Epicurus' account of pleasure, and the kingdom of heaven. Seneca himself had praised Epicurus, but the Philosopher asserts that "there is no distance between them ... excelling in virtues is having a tranquil soul and vice versa" (*Coll.* §82). The Philosopher does not combine the views; rather, Epicurus and Seneca have the same view. The apparent difference is just in terminology: "This is what Epicurus meant when he said that the highest good is pleasure, that is to say, when the soul's peacefulness is so great that its quiet is neither disturbed externally by bodily affliction nor internally by the conscience of any sin nor does any vice stand in its way, but its excellent will is entirely fulfilled" (§87). It seems likely that Abelard believed this was based on Seneca's testimony, as did John of Salisbury. But the Philosopher goes further: "I think that the happiness which Epicurus calls 'pleasure' your Christ calls 'the kingdom of heaven.' What does a thing's name matter so long as the thing itself stays the same" (§92). The Christian's terse response is simply "No [...] our views about the highest good differ considerably" (§93).

The Philosopher offers an easily identifiable Stoic account. Virtue is the only path to man's greatest good and this greatest good is achievable in this life. This is the point of disagreement with the Christian. The Philosopher initially asserts the Stoic position that the virtuous man is happy – has attained the highest good – regardless of his physical conditions. A virtuous man being tortured is still happy; he has attained the highest good for man (§84). However, when pressed by the Christian, the philosopher capitulates. He states that the will is always impeded while the soul is imprisoned in the body. The embodied soul does not have true liberty and thus can never be truly happy (§87). The Philosopher then lists cold, rain, and poor clothes as impediments to true happiness. This has caused some consternation in the secondary literature (see e.g. King 1995; Marenbon 1997; Normore 2004). The Philosopher has clearly conflated a non-moral good (e.g. dry socks) with a moral good (happiness). The Stoics' position here is clear: dry socks are merely a preferred indifferent. The moral good is still happiness and the virtuous person is happy in the rain. If it were Abelard's goal in the dialogue to have the Christian demolish the Stoic position then certainly he has erred in having the dispute hinge on such a shallow and conflated understanding of good. It is absurd to think that Abelard was unaware of the shift from moral to non-moral goods. So what is his point? The Philosopher takes several stances that Abelard could easily have found in Seneca or Cicero, but that Abelard himself does not agree with. This is one of them. Seneca in many places makes the same controversial concession that the Philosopher makes (*Ep.* 102.23; 65.16). It is at least possible that the Philosopher has presented the Stoic position as Abelard understands it. There are many reasons for Abelard to have developed the case in this way. He argued that ancient philosophers who followed the natural law were led to love God and were thus saved. But he also appears to have thought that philosophers since Christ's revelation of the New Law were not up to that ancient standard. It is not surprising to see Abelard give the Philosopher a position he disagrees with. It is a bit surprising that the position is so obviously flawed. However, since the view is found in his foremost source it only supports Abelard's view of the Christian-era fall of philosophy.

The Philosopher's capitulation here is the starting point for the Christian to expound what is very likely Abelard's account of the highest good and the path to its achievement. The

Christian accepts the Philosopher's view of the natural law. All law, even the New Law, derives from the natural law. Understanding the natural law leads one to develop virtue. The Christian accepts the Philosopher's account of the unity of virtue. But the other aspects of the Philosopher's view get rejected or modified. Where the Philosopher argues that virtue merits happiness, the Christian must disagree. Virtue cannot merit happiness straightaway; this leaves no room for grace. The Christian questions the Philosopher's core conception of virtue and happiness. The Philosopher claimed that Seneca's tranquil mind and Epicurus' pleasure were identical and the same as Christ's kingdom of heaven. The Christian simply said "no," they are not (*Coll.* §§92–3). Abelard argued that ancient philosophers who studied natural law were led to love of God and this somehow merited salvific grace. However, the love of God is missing from the Philosopher's account, and it is missing in two ways. As noted above the Philosopher's secular common-good account of justice differs from Abelard's. It can be argued that Cato loved his neighbor and thus acted justly. For Abelard this is not enough. True virtue is to love your neighbor because it shows love of God. The end of justice is love of God not perfect community (*Sen.* 248 seq.; see Marenbon 1997). The difference is one of correct understanding of the natural law and proper intention. In the second way, it just seems obvious to the Christian that tranquility of mind is qualitatively different from the eternal happiness that comes from loving God.

This is why the Christian rejects the claim that happiness is attainable in this life, as well as the claim about the lack of degree of the virtues. The Philosopher's Stoic tranquility is a good thing in the face of the vicissitudes of worldly fortune, but where virtue is understood as growing from love of God, this must be rewarded in the afterlife. The rejection of the equal degree of virtue allows the Christian his other great innovation: there are degrees of reward and punishment. The saved are happy but not equally so. Those who love God more are rewarded with a deeper understanding of God and are therefore happier. They are also inspired to love God more and thus their happiness is not static (*Coll.* §150). This is radically different from the Stoic-Epicurean tranquility of mind that the Philosopher advocates.

### *Ethics*

Abelard's other major ethical work, the *Ethics*, also known as *Scito te ipsum* (Know yourself), promised to be a complete discussion of moral action, but the text is unfinished. We have Book 1: a thorough and well-informed discussion of sin in its many and various forms. We have only the preface to Book 2: a few introductory lines promising an account of right conduct. The problem Abelard faces is an easily recognizable Stoic problem. He must explain moral rightness and wrongness in the best of all possible worlds. This in itself is not uncommon in the Middle Ages. So many church fathers were influenced by these Stoic views that this way of framing the problem becomes more a common heritage than a Stoic influence. Abelard, on the other hand, praises Seneca as the best teacher of morals (*Ep.* 7; Radice 1974: 243–4). Indeed, his ethical theory is not merely influenced by Seneca's Stoicism; I believe Abelard would happily call his view Stoic. Abelard follows the Stoics in fixing moral praise or blame internally; actions, or deeds, are morally indifferent. A person is moral or immoral based on their consent to an intention. Consent to intention, derives from Seneca's and Cicero's discussions of assent (*adsensio*) but it is importantly different.

In the *Dialogues* the Christian asserts that God creates the best of all possible worlds. Every thing that exists and every event that occurs, occurs because God wants it to. It is on this point that the Philosopher of the *Dialogues* confuses moral goods with preferred indifferents. Although Abelard does not explicitly differentiate, many modern scholars attribute to

Abelard a distinction between metaphysical goodness and moral goodness (Marenbon 1997; King 1995; Normore 2004). Every substance that exists and event that occurs is pleasing to God and metaphysically good. But the manner in which humans participate in these events is up to us and the source of moral praise and blame. Morally speaking, actions are indifferent. Abelard uses Stoic terminology here, but his meaning is quite different. For the traditional Stoics something is indifferent if one can be virtuous with or without it. Preferred indifferents are good to have when available but not essential. For Abelard every thing that exists is metaphysically good. Human actions are also metaphysically good and thus pleasing to God. But actions are morally indifferent. An act is called good or bad derivatively, based on the intention of the agent. Abelard gives several examples. His most controversial is the explanation of Christ's crucifixion. God Judas and Jesus himself participated in turning Christ over to the Jews (the Romans are oddly uninvolved). Each merits a different moral judgement. Judas merits blame: he consented to an intention he believed to be scornful of God. Christ merits praise: he consented to an intention that he believed showed love of God, and he was correct (*Eth.* 28,1 seq.). The Jews are morally neutral: they consented to an intention that they mistakenly believed showed love of God (*Eth.* 54,27 seq.). They were mistaken in that belief. If the act had an intrinsic moral value all participants should receive equal judgement. Abelard argues also that many times we are ignorant of our actions and bear no reasonable blame. Alternately we intend to do something good or bad, but we are thwarted and still deserve praise or blame based on our intention.

Abelard was very likely aware of Seneca's accounts of assent. For Seneca, assent in the moral sense is assent to a proposition of the form "X is fitting to be done" (see Seneca, *Ep.* 113.17–20). For Seneca the agent can entertain the proposition that X is fitting to be done. The agent is then able to assent or not to the proposition. He can believe or reject the proposition that X is fitting to be done. The assumption in Seneca seems to be that once the agent assents that X is fitting to be done he has committed himself to X. If the proposition is true the agent is moral, if false immoral. Seneca's formulation does not allow for the agent to consciously choose to refrain from what is assented to as fitting. It reduces moral error to intellectual error. Seneca, and other Stoics, follow the Socratic claim that no one does wrong willingly. Abelard's consent to an intention is an attempt to explain genuine moral error.

As with many key concepts, Abelard does not precisely define "consent" or "intention." It is tempting to read Abelard as claiming that intention captures the propositional content "X is fitting to be done." Consent would be an additional mental act whereby the agent gives himself over to what is intended. However, he uses the terms interchangeably in a way that suggests consent and intention are not different mental acts. It seems that an agent cannot intend X without consenting to X, and vice versa. What is clear is that the belief that X is fitting to be done does not compel consent to the intention. Conversely the belief that X is not fitting to be done does not preclude consent. Abelard's theory places moral fault in the act of consent. An agent who refrains from what he believes fitting, or who consents to what he believes unfitting, is immoral. Moral wrongdoing is thus subjective. The agent consented to what he believed was unfitting: that is sufficient for blame. Moral rightness is objective. An agent avoids blame by consenting to what he believes is fitting, but only merits praise if that belief is correct (*Eth.* 48,32 seq.).

Abelard has little to say about how we determine what is fitting, or what happens to those with habitually incorrect beliefs. Presumably this would have been covered in the unfinished second book of the *Ethics*. What he does say is along the same lines he develops in the discussions of natural law and virtue. What is fitting is what shows love of God; what is unfitting shows scorn for God.

### Logic

Abelard's logic is strikingly similar to Stoic logic. His main source for Stoic thought, Seneca, was not a logician. Seneca, in fact, doubted the value of studying logic (see e.g. *Ep.* 45; Barnes 1997: 12–23) and complained that the study of wisdom had been replaced by the study of words (*Ep.* 108.23). So it is not at all clear that there is any direct explicit Stoic influence to Abelard's logic. Stoic logic is propositional and concerned with the distinctions between arguments and “assertables” or propositions (Bobzien 2003). Abelard's discussion of all these topics is strikingly similar. In some cases Abelard uses the same technical terms. However, as Ebbesen has written, the route of transmission of these terms from Stoics to Abelard “defies my imagination” (Ebbesen 2004: 120). Lapidge has claimed that “Stoic logic [...] was virtually unknown” in the twelfth century (Lapidge 1988: 85), while Ebbesen has suggested that some elements of Stoic logic “had become the common property of educated people [...], but the system as a whole was discarded” (Ebbesen 1982: 103). Others are confident that there is a genuine continuity between ancient Stoic logic and Abelard (see Boh 1982). The route of continuity, if there is one, is prohibitively difficult to reconstruct. Lapidge suggests that a brilliant and attentive reader “could possibly have formed some (albeit incomplete) notion of Stoic logic” (Lapidge 1988: 87) from what few elements of Stoic logic were available (in Apuleius and Martianus Capella). Abelard was just such a brilliant and attentive reader, who was also drawn to novel and contrarian ideas. It is in this loosest sense that Abelard's logic is a continuation of the Stoic tradition. Abelard learned the elements, hints, and suggestions that, unattributed to the Stoics, were part of the intellectual tradition. Just like the ancient Stoics, he then used these ideas to develop a system of logic that illustrated some of the shortcomings in Aristotelian logic and provided a solution. Unlike in his ethics, Abelard would not have known enough Stoic logic to acknowledge the influence. But his reconstruction is built on a Stoic foundation and is a source of transmission for “Stoic” logic into the later Middle Ages.

Abelard is best known for his nominalist theory of universals. The theory of universals has many similarities to Stoic views, but the direct influence of Stoicism is quite thin. In his *Logica “ingredientibus”* (*LI*) Abelard rejects completely the claim that there are real universal things: “nothing exists that is not discrete” (*LI* 1 19.23). The problem of universals is not a problem of metaphysics. The real question for Abelard is “How do universal words apply to discrete individuals?” (*LI* 1 16.25). There are some identifiably Stoic elements in Abelard's answer. The universal word “human” applies to Socrates because he has the *status* being-a-human. This status is not a thing but it has causal powers. The status is the cause of the imposition of the universal word. Seneca (*Ep.* 58) does present the Stoic idea of non-things and it is possible this mention could have started Abelard thinking along these lines. The imposition of the word is important for Abelard. The person who first imposes the word “human” does so because he recognizes that Socrates and Plato each have the *status* being-a-man. He then imposes the universal word “human” to signify all individuals that have this *status*. The meaningful word – *sermo* – is the universal. The spoken sound, or word token – *vox* – is not. This is a Stoic distinction, hinted at by Seneca (*Ep.* 117). But here Abelard is responding to a more recent influence: the late eleventh-century vocalists. Most notably Abelard's first teacher Roscelin had held that universals were simply *vox*. We know little about Roscelin's work, but other vocalist works, most notably Garlandus', are accessible. Garlandus attempts a complete account of Aristotle's categories as exclusively a discussion of the properties of words, *voces*. The extent to which this vocalist tradition employs those Stoic ideas that were the common inheritance of the age is unclear. Garlandus, in his writings

on logic proper, shows none of the similarities to Stoic logic that are so striking in Abelard's work.

Abelard's logic, like the Stoics', is largely propositional. In Stoic logic a sentence asserts or signifies an "assertable" (*axiōma*), what we would now call a proposition (see texts in LS §§34–5). For Abelard a sentence signifies a *dictum*. The *dictum*, like the assertable is a non-thing with causal powers; it is the cause of the sentence being true or false. Once again the theory is possibly transmitted via Seneca who discusses propositions as "assertables" (see e.g. *Ep.* 117.13). It is equally possible that Abelard discovered the idea in the *Institutiones grammanticae*, of Priscian, who would have been familiar with the concepts from Simplicius or Ammonius.<sup>4</sup> However Abelard's *dictum* and the Stoic assertable differ in important respects: the assertable is not indexed to a time, thus its truth value changes. For example, the assertable signified by the sentence "It is day" is true when it is day and false when it is night. For Abelard the sentence "It is day" uttered during the day signifies a true *dictum*. A different token of the sentence uttered at night signifies a different false *dictum* (*LI* 3 328.17). Assertables subsist even when no one utters the sentence that would signify them. This is not true of *dicta*. If the sentence is not uttered there is no *dictum* (*LI* 2 291.26). These are quite serious differences between the Stoic theory of propositions and Abelard's. In the discussion of consent above, it is clear that Abelard understood Seneca's and Cicero's accounts of assent. The Stoic notion of assent is modified to Abelard's consent to intention. Here Abelard could not have received the Stoic theory of propositions in enough detail to be aware that he was altering Stoic theory. However, these points are two of the more dubious Stoic claims about assertables. Abelard may have been developing an idea he found in Seneca or Priscian in the way he found most reasonable.

Abelard's account of propositional logic, and conditional propositions in particular, is the most strikingly similar to Stoic logic. However, it is also the part with the largest claim to independent rediscovery. Abelard developed an account of sentential negation that he worked into an Aristotelian scheme. In Aristotelian logic the negation of a sentence is formed by negating the predicate. The negation of (1) "Socrates is a man" would be (2) "Socrates is not a man." Abelard maintains this form of negation but adds what he calls extinctive negation. Here the entire sense of the sentence is negated. The extinctive negation of (1) is: (3) "It is not the case that Socrates is a man" (*De Rijk* 1956: 477). He also develops the containment theory of true conditionals. The consequent of a true conditional must be contained in the antecedent (*De Rijk* 1956: 253). As Chris Martin notes, this leads him to reject the deduction theorem (Martin 2004: 182). An argument might be valid according to the rules of syllogistic logic, but the corresponding conditional can still be false. These are significant developments of the Stoic theory, but it is not clear that Abelard knew it was a Stoic theory he was developing.

### John of Salisbury

John of Salisbury presents a more difficult case. John is not a Stoic: in his *Policraticus* (*Pol.*) he describes himself as an Academic Skeptic (7, prol.; Nederman 1990: 147–8), reserving judgement in all matters that are doubtful to the wise and professing moderation in all his views. As such he sets up extremes: the Stoic believes all things are necessary; the Epicurean, that all things are by chance (7.1; Nederman 1990: 149). John's *Policraticus* was widely read and circulated for several hundred years after its publication in 1159, probably more so than any identifiably Stoic text, and certainly more so than any works by Abelard. John is a conduit for many Stoic views but his presentation is not always subtle, sometimes inaccurate, and occasionally false.

It is difficult to assess the depth of John's knowledge of Stoicism. John's primary source was Seneca, whom he identifies as an ardent Stoic (*Entheticus* 1267). John shares Abelard's opinion that Seneca was a pre-eminent moral philosopher and so gets his sense of Stoic ethics and virtue theory from Seneca. On the other hand there is Marcus Terentius Varro. Recognized as a Stoic for his writing on language, John tells us that "no one wrote better, or said worse things" (*Entheticus* 1180). There is also reason to question John's textual sources. For example, in *Metalogicon* (*Met.*) 2.17, the famous chapter on universals, John asserts Seneca's definition of an idea as "an eternal exemplar of those things that come to be as a result of nature" (McGarry 1955: 114). This is almost a direct quote from Seneca's *Letter* 58. However, in *Letter* 58, Seneca attributes this definition to Plato (see *Ep.* 58.19). Moreover, earlier in the letter Seneca describes the Stoic view of genera and species based on the metaphysical distinction between things and non-things (*Ep.* 58.14). This Stoic view is missing from John's discussion. It is hard to explain the omission unless John had an edited version of Seneca's letter. John deserved his reputation as a widely read scholar, but we should be cautious in assessing what John would have read. As will be discussed below, John completely omits the Stoics in his history of logic. If there had been an integrated presentation of Stoicism in the twelfth century John likely would have read it, and described it.

Instead John presents several assertions that particular doctrines are "Stoic." He asserts that for a Stoic "the art of living well is the art of arts" (*Pol.* 5.9; Nederman 1990: 82); "a faithful person keeps his word" (3.6; Nederman 1990: 20); "injustice is a mental disposition that removes equity from judgement" (4.12; Nederman 1990: 62). These don't tell us much about Stoicism, and are vague enough that he can agree. John tells us that Stoics seek the reason for things in names: for example, "lector" means "stick of the law" (*Pol.* 4.2; *Met.* 4.34). But John does not explore a theory of naming. In multiple passages John contrasts the Stoic commitment to necessity or providence with the Epicurean commitment to chance. He always then goes on to say that as an Academic he reserves judgement on this doubtful matter (see e.g. *Pol.* 7.1). John discusses this topic at some length but does not have a subtle understanding of Stoic fatalism.

Several of John's assertions of Stoic views may indicate that these views had some currency in the twelfth century. Once John mentions "that master architect fire" but he quickly dismisses this notion saying that such a "master architect" would itself have been created by the real creator, God (*Met.* 1.8; McGarry 1955: 29). At one point John discusses the world soul. Seneca states that "reason is a certain part of the divine soul placed in a human body" (*Ep.* 66.12). John assures us that Seneca's use of *quedam* indicates that this is a virtual not a quantitative part (*Met.* 4.16; McGarry 1955: 228). So, those who identify the world soul with the Holy Spirit on Seneca's authority are wholly mistaken. John finally attributes to the Stoics the claim that matter, form, and God are coeternal, had no beginning, and that God is not the creator but merely combines the other two (*Met.* 2.20; McGarry 1955: 129). The view seems to be a misunderstanding of the Platonism of the *Timeaus* attributed to the Stoics.

### ***Providence and fatalism***

The history and influence of Stoic fatalism on the Christian church fathers' treatment of the problem of free will and foreknowledge is well documented. John's view itself is not very novel: God has perfect foreknowledge, but this does not confer necessity of future events, especially not the free choices of human beings. He discusses the issue in many places, and most thoroughly in *Policraticus* 2.20–3. In framing the debate he continually sets up the Stoics and Epicureans as foils. The Stoics, in order to preserve the necessity of fate, make contingent

things necessary. The Epicureans, in order to preserve the contingency of events, deny the necessity of fate. Because the denial of either free will or the necessity of fate is absurd, John, the Academic, rejects both extreme views, and asserts that there is a changeless disposition of changeable things. How this works is beyond the scope of human knowledge (*Pol.* 2.20–1). In *Policraticus* 2, chapter 22, he picks up what he takes to be a classical Stoic objection. John's view allows the impossible to follow from the possible. God foreknows that John will choose X. If it is possible that John not choose X then from this possibility follows the impossibility that God's foreknowledge is false. John's initial response is "Let the Stoics proclaim their stunning paradoxes." He will not attempt to limit the infinite power of God within the confines of his own "dull wits" (*Pol.* 2.22). The sense one gets from John is that, outside the realm of moral philosophy, Stoicism offers the kind of cleverness one expects from bright undergraduates. Chapter 23 confirms this impression. The chapter is entitled "Obiectio novi Stoici," the objection of a modern Stoic. The modern Stoic asks if you can do something you have no intention of doing. He then offers you 1,000 gold pieces to do it. John notes that he may be a bit ignorant, but he does not see how this proves all events are necessary (*Pol.* 2.23).

### ***Natural law***

The themes in Peter Abelard's writing that are so clearly influenced by Stoicism are also found in John of Salisbury's but with a much less clear Stoic influence. John writes extensively about natural law. He cites Chrysippus as a source among many others (*Pol.* 4.2, probably drawing on Marcianus; cf. *SVF* 3.314). But John's view lacks the depth of Abelard's Stoic commitment. He seems to equate natural and divine law, but where Abelard's Philosopher holds a clearly Stoic view that divine law is a derived subset of natural law, John holds that scripture is a second law that is the written version of the divine/natural law (*Pol.* 4.2). John holds the most general Stoic view that the natural law is a code of regulatory principles that other law is derived from, not a standard of justice to which other law answers. John also adds a uniquely Academic twist, asserting that some precepts of the natural law are eternal and necessary and applicable in all instances, others are flexible (*Pol.* 4.12.6), although he doesn't give examples. Cicero, in what one author has called a fit of Stoic grandeur, declares that the natural law does not need interpretation because it is the same in the minds of all rational people (Dickinson 1963: xxxvi). John is too involved in practical governance to accept that.

### ***Happiness, virtue, and ethics***

On the topics of happiness, virtue, and ethics John understands much of the Stoic tradition. Despite his claims that Seneca is the pre-eminent moral philosopher, John is at pains to point out that he is not himself a Stoic. John argues that Stoicism is one of many paths to the same destination: happiness (*Pol.* 8.8). Following any of these secular or philosophical paths will lead to happiness of a sort, a lower kind of happiness that is attainable in this world. The happiness that philosophy leads to is not the highest good for man. Man's highest good is a gift of grace received in heaven (*Pol.* 8.25). Anyone who genuinely and humbly seeks to know nature will be moved to know God, regardless of his starting point. This is because of the philosophical attitude, not because of the superiority of any philosophical system. A true philosopher will come to love God and may receive this grace.

John's view is very far from Abelard's. For John there is no question that the ancient philosophers did not merit salvation, although they may have been granted salvific grace. Additionally John finds Stoicism unable to achieve even the lower secular happiness. He is



aware of the Stoic claims that only virtue is good and only the virtuous person is happy (*Pol.* 8.15). He argues that virtue is more effective at achieving happiness when it has external goods. He treats these external goods as real moral goods when used virtuously. He seems totally unaware of the Stoic theory of indifferents and preferred indifferents. He accepts what he calls a Peripatetic view that external goods are morally good when used as instruments in the exercise of virtue. This is not quite the same issue that arose with Abelard's Philosopher above. John is aware that he is making a moral good – happiness – depend on the position and use of external goods. But John need not be troubled by this. The moral good achieved through virtue and goods is the lower secular happiness that can be enjoyed in this world. It is not man's highest good, the happiness of salvation. John further doubts that it is possible to be a Stoic sage without grace (*Pol.* 3.1). The sage's level of wisdom and acceptance comes only with grace. If the Stoic sage is both virtuous and happy because he recognizes the truth of nature and accepts the natural law, then for John this is the acceptance of God's plan and the resignation and happiness that comes occurs only with grace and only in the afterlife. In John of Salisbury's judgment, Stoicism is an inadequate path to a lesser happiness.

### Logic

John's *Metalogicon* was written as a response to one Cornificius. This may have been a real person or a composite foil bringing together the arguments of all those opposed to the study of logic. Cornificius's attack puts John in an awkward position: he cites Seneca in defense of the claim that studying logic is useless, even pernicious (*Met.* 1.22). Seneca had condemned the kind of clever precision that can attract the young and pass for reasoning (*Ep.* 82). As John sees it Seneca didn't condemn the study of logic. He condemned only those who never progress beyond simplistic cleverness and sophistry (*Met.* 2.8).<sup>5</sup> Instead he argues that Seneca properly understood endorses probabilism, John's own theory that logic starts with principles accepted by the wise, and proceeds to develop persuasive arguments. To the extent that John discusses the logical views of a Stoic – Seneca – it is not a discussion of logic at all but an endorsement of inquiry and a rejection of philosophical dogmatism. John has no knowledge of Stoic logic as such. The Stoics are omitted entirely in his presentation of the history of logic. Logic was introduced as a branch of philosophy by Plato, systematized by Aristotle, and transmitted through Porphyry and Boethius (*Met.* 2.2; McGarry 1955: 76–7).

In fact, John lists two Stoic beliefs as proof that they had no logic. If the Stoics had bothered to learn logic they would not have fallen into the error of thinking that all sins were equally bad and that matter and form were coeternal with God (see e.g. *Met.* 2.2).

It is clear, then, that John of Salisbury was not as sympathetic to Stoicism as Peter Abelard was, but even so Stoicism regularly features in his discussions of a variety of philosophical topics. In his *Policraticus* there is, as we have seen, chapter devoted to "Obiectio novi Stoici" (*Pol.* 2.23) and another devoted to the Stoic account of mental disturbances (*Pol.* 7.3; translated in Pike 1972), drawing at length from Aulus Gellius's anecdote about a Stoic in a storm at sea in which Gellius reports the view of Epictetus (*NA* 19.1). His knowledge of Stoicism was, by the standards of his day, more than one might expect.

### Notes

- 1 The *Dialogues* is edited and translated in Marenbon and Orlandi 2001. The *Ethics* is edited and translated in Luscombe 1971. References are to these editions, but note that both works are also translated in Spade 1995.

- 2 John Marenbon notes several instances of the Philosopher holding an austere or secular view that Abelard rejects in other writings as showing an insufficient love of God. See Marenbon 1997: 309 and Marenbon and Orlandi 2001: liv.
- 3 Suggested by Marenbon 1997: 328–31. Salisbury has a similar claim below. But for Salisbury God's act of grace is an unmerited free act on God's part. It need not be merited from love of law and virtue.
- 4 (*Editor's note* – J.S.) The relevant passage from Priscian (1.1–2) is translated by Copeland and Sluiter (2009: 172–3), who note that Priscian's definitions ultimately derive from Stoic sources.
- 5 In this chapter John conflates the Elder and Younger Seneca, citing from works of both as if they were one person. He was by no means alone in doing this.

### Further reading

For previous discussions of Abelard's relationship with Stoicism see Lapidge (1988) and Normore (2004). For wider studies of Abelard's philosophy as a whole see Brower and Guilfooy (2004) and Marenbon (1997). For the broader context of the reception of Stoicism in the Middle Ages see Verbeke (1983) and Ingham (2007).

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# 7

## STOIC INFLUENCES IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

*Mary Beth Ingham*

Stoic thought was “everywhere and nowhere in the Middle Ages” (Ebbesen 2004: 125). Sten Ebbesen’s insightful comment aptly frames the challenges and opportunities that await the scholar who seeks to ferret out the influence of Stoic philosophy for medieval thinkers. While on the one hand texts of various classical authors were readily available to the learned medieval reader, the term “Stoicism” or “Stoic” had little genuine meaning, at least not in the sense it has for us today. Pagan authors were just that: authors whose texts were studied and read for their content, not for their placement within a philosophical tradition whose contours distinguished it from other traditions, such as Socratic, Platonic, Aristotelian, Epicurean. For this reason, the type of investigation we pursue here offers both promise and difficulty.

There is no lack of scholarly evidence to show that Stoic sources and texts permeated medieval culture. Gérard Verbeke (1983) has noted the prevalence of Stoic themes for medieval philosophy. Michel Spanneut (1973) has studied the textual sources available to thinkers from antiquity to modernity. Sten Ebbesen (2004) has investigated the Stoic influence in the domain of logic. Bonnie Kent (1995) has suggested the role of Stoic categories for Franciscan thinkers. In short, the prevalence of Stoic authors and source texts during the Middle Ages is not a topic for scholarly dispute.

What remains unexplored, however, is the type of role that the inherited Stoic influences played for medieval thinkers, particularly those thirteenth-century scholars who sought to understand the new texts of Aristotle, specifically his *Nicomachean Ethics*. In what follows, I propose that Stoic thought influenced the interpretative context for textual reception and was therefore intimately involved in the project of making Aristotle “available to the Latins.” In other words, rather than tracing a particular Stoic author (such as Seneca) or investigating how a particular medieval thinker used Stoic themes, I am interested here in exploring how an already present Stoic understanding of moral wisdom (inherited from the twelfth century) played a critical role in the reception, interpretation and integration of Aristotle’s (rather different) notion of practical wisdom, *phronêsis*.

I pursue this investigation according to two distinct yet related interpretive trajectories. The first relates to an early confusion between *prudens* and *sapiens*, both Latin terms that signify the wise person, yet not precisely in the same way. Their confusion led to a specific reading of Aristotle’s *ethica vetus* that translated the term for a person of practical wisdom

(*phronimos*) as *sapiens* (the sage) rather than *prudens* (the person of practical wisdom). Together, these two elements of confusion and translation set the stage for a second trajectory – a more sustained investigation into the influence of Stoic philosophy on one strain of medieval reflection on the nature of a practical science (Aristotle’s purpose in the *Ethics*) and on the person of practical wisdom (Aristotle’s *phronimos*). This fuller exploration completes this study with a turn to three thirteenth-century figures: William of Auxerre, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. In each case, we consider (1) how the given thinker understood the nature of practical science and moral wisdom, (2) how he sifted through the inherited textual data, and finally (3) how he made sense of Aristotle. Through this study I hope to show first, how present Stoic influence was; second, how influential the Stoic assumptions were; and third, how the medievals arrived at a clearer understanding of Aristotle thanks to the inherited (and perhaps unnoticed) Stoic tradition.

### **Stoicism was “everywhere and nowhere”**

The Stoic-patristic tradition surrounding moral wisdom was both highly developed and influential for medieval reflection. In addition to patristic authors like Augustine (Byers 2013), pagan authors including Cicero (Colish 1990: 147–58) and, most prominently, Seneca (Caron 2006) informed medieval reflection on moral questions. Seneca’s texts (authentic or apocryphal) emphasized the moral goal as action in consonance with one’s words. Although Cicero was not himself a Stoic, his writings carried a wealth of Stoic themes and insights. He was an important author for patristic and medieval thinkers (Colish 1990: II 157–8). Cicero’s texts influenced the discussion of prudence (moral wisdom) and its central role in moral matters. Together, these sources influenced the background for thirteenth-century moral reflection. Specifically, they helped frame the moral context for practical wisdom, understood as *prudencia*. How Aristotle’s notion of practical wisdom, *phronêsis*, becomes entwined with the Stoic *prudencia* is the focus for the first part of our study.

Central to this project is the important way that Stoicism, not that obvious a philosophical tradition to medievals, informed a context that made possible the reception of Aristotelian thought by the Latins. Stoic and Aristotelian notions of practical wisdom are both similar and distinct in important respects. Both present the fulfillment of human nature as a project focused entirely on this world. Both identify practical wisdom as central to moral living, uniting the theoretical with the practical, and knowledge with virtue. These aspects belong to the common Socratic heritage of both Aristotelian and Stoic moral traditions (Aubenque 1963: 184–5). Nonetheless, they mask three important differences: the constitution of the rational soul, the activity of moral decision-making, and the epistemic value of the moral judgment. These differences will prove to be decisive.

Before we begin, however, we must keep in mind that many ancient sources permeated medieval culture. I do not propose to argue here for anything close to a *pure* Stoicism. Rather than speak of schools and traditions, it is perhaps more helpful to speak of authors such as Cicero and texts, such as Seneca’s *Letters to Lucilius* or the *Formula vitae honestae* of Martin Braga, itself a compilation of Seneca’s moral insights.

### ***Ethics*: a history of texts and translators**

The entrance and reception of Aristotle’s *Ethics* involved a complex history of translations, too long to recount here. Helpful and important for us to keep in mind are the broad strokes. The first translations of the *Ethics* known to the Latins, *Ethica vetus* (Bks 2 and 3) and

*Ethica nova* (Bk 1 and fragments of 2–10), were already available in the mid-twelfth century and the work of Burgundio of Pisa (Brams 2005). Hermann the German's translation of Averroes's Middle Commentary on the *Ethics* (*translatio hispanica*) dated from 1240 and was followed in 1243 with his translation of an Arabic summary of the *Ethics*, known as the *Summa Alexandrinorum*. This work was overshadowed in 1246–47, however, when Robert Grosseteste translated the entire work along with Greek commentaries (Luscombe 2005). Finally, in the years between 1250 and 1260 William of Moerbeke completed his revised translation (Dod 1982).

Aristotle's ethical text did not enter a moral vacuum. This simple fact helps to explain why, in *Ethica vetus* at 1106b36, Aristotle's term for the person of practical wisdom, *phronimos*, is translated as *sapiens*, rather than *prudens* (Gauthier 1972: 14). Why is this apparently minor textual detail important? Because it reveals a far deeper confusion between two very different visions of moral wisdom that we will sketch out shortly: the Stoic, enlightenment vision of the sage (*sapiens*) and the Aristotelian deliberative vision of the person of practical wisdom (*prudens*). When Grosseteste follows this translation in mid-century, he reinforces and codifies the translator's confusion (see Mercken 1991: 37\*).

To appreciate the force of this terminological transposition and the resulting confusion, it is important to recall that Aristotle differentiates between *phronêsis* and *sophia* (both forms of wisdom, the first practical and the second theoretical) only in Book 6 (at 1141b15–18). Without an understanding of this important and later distinction between the two, the listing of intellectual virtues at the end of *Ethica nova* (at 1103a5–6: *sophia*, *sunesis* and *phronêsis*) is rendered in Latin as *sophiam quidem et fronesim et intelligenciam* (Gauthier 1972: 94–5). Notice that no attempt was made to translate either Greek term for wisdom. No equivalent word came to mind. While this may not have been significant for *sophia*, the Stoic-monastic legacy involving prudence would make the situation far more complicated for *fronesim* (*phronêsis* or practical wisdom). The exact meaning of this term would escape the early thirteenth-century readers. Quite naturally, they made sense of it from within their own inherited Stoic-monastic conceptual frame. By leaving Aristotle's term for practical wisdom in its Greek form as *fronesim*, translator Burgundio of Pisa muddled an authentic (that is, Aristotelian) understanding of this passage as it relates to practical wisdom. What's more, given the context, a reader could easily take *fronesim* to be a synonym for *sophiam*. As a higher type of wisdom, it could then be linked to eternal law, to cosmic harmony, and, ultimately, to divine wisdom.<sup>1</sup> Human action would flow from an intuition regarding the divine will, rather than from a judgment regarding the aspects of a contingent situation, more proper to Aristotle's understanding of practical wisdom.

We need to say a bit more about the context into which this early text was received and translated. Here we find Stoic and patristic sources and influences. Cicero's authority had already helped to frame the moral context according to a model of spiritual enlightenment, more akin to the Stoic-patristic than Aristotelian perspective. When, in the *De inventione* (*Inv.*), Cicero explains what the Greeks mean by prudence, he uses the term *scientia* (scientific, certain knowledge) and links its meaning to Roman prudence, itself distinct from wisdom as the foremost of all virtues.<sup>2</sup> His presentation of moral wisdom presents three key terms as synonymous: *phronêsis*, *prudencia* and *scientia*.

A contrast between the Stoic and Aristotelian approaches will help clarify the difference between the Stoic and Aristotelian understanding of practical wisdom. The rational soul is unified for Stoic writers, while Aristotle divides the soul into scientific and deliberative parts. As a consequence of this, the Stoic writers do not present the activity of moral decision-making as involving a deliberative stage. Rather, practical decisions appear to come as the

result of a moral intuition. Aristotle, by contrast, presents deliberation as essential for the development of virtue and moral character. What's more, early Stoic texts identify *phronêsis* with *epistêmê* (scientific, certain knowledge; see *SVF* 3.262) while Aristotle (at *Eth. Nic.* 1140b25–8) emphasizes that *phronêsis* is *doxa* (opinion). These three differences have a significant impact upon moral conclusions. While Aristotle views moral conclusions as holding “for the most part,” the Stoic moral proposition, rightly articulated, has immediate impact on human impulse and links logic to ethics and nature (Inwood 1987: 106–7).

This set of distinguishing characteristics points more deeply to a unified Stoic universe that includes both human and divine, under the direction of *logos*, nature or reason. Natural law expresses the *logos* and plays a foundational role in moral decisions and decision-making.<sup>3</sup> Because of the philosophical commitment to cosmic, moral and logical unity, the Stoic approach tends to bring together what Aristotle's text works to distinguish, namely the difference between theoretical and practical reasoning. This tendency toward unity is enhanced where patristic texts<sup>4</sup> bring Stoic moral categories to bear on medieval monastic practice. Here moral judgments result from moral enlightenment and express the cosmic pattern. Moral action harmonizes with nature and with the rational, eternal and natural order. The moral expert or sage does not develop in virtue by means of civic activity (as in the Aristotelian view). Rather, as a result of his withdrawal or flight from the world (*fuga mundi*), the wise and virtuous are able to look after the welfare of the *polis* (Colish 1990: I 39).

A second term that appears as synonymous with prudence in the monastic tradition, *discretio* (Ingham 2011), was equally influential on the growing Stoic-monastic understanding of moral wisdom. As Stoic and patristic insights and moral approaches were integrated into early medieval monastic practice, they helped to frame moral progress as spiritual growth in key intellectual virtues, among them insight into moral matters, called variously discretion or discernment. This legacy would be mixed, for both Platonic and Stoic thinkers in antiquity had identified discretion as the essential foundation for rational behavior and moral insight (Dingjan 1967: 8–9). The innate ability to distinguish good from evil and the acquired ability to make proper judgments in light of circumstances are essential to every moral agent, once one has reached the “age of discretion.” Writings of the desert fathers added a second dimension to *discretio*: the *ne quid nimis*. Here is the maxim of moderation which advocates appropriate action (Scholl 2001: 391) as the final act of *discretio*. Once the truth and falsehood have been determined, once the good action has been singled out, there remains only the enactment of moral judgment, adjusted to the particular circumstances of the concrete situation. In this final act, *discretio* is among the most flexible of moral attributes.

Discretion pairs moderation with moral insight to typify the spiritual, moral master or sage. John Cassian's influential definition of *discretio* as *sapientia*, essential for the internal citadel of wisdom and moderator of the virtues,<sup>5</sup> would be repeated throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Likewise, Bernard of Clairvaux identified discretion as mother and moderator of all virtues.<sup>6</sup> The fruit of this rich and complex legacy of pagan antiquity and monastic practice, involving *sapientia*, *scientia* and *discretio*, appears in the work of important twelfth-century masters (Delhay 1949a). And all of this will pave the way for Stoic moral intuitions to be carried into medieval reflection upon moral living and moral decision-making, now densely integrated in monastic authors and practice. Consider a few examples.

The *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, attributed to William of Conches, was a highly influential work comprised of ethical maxims drawn from ancient thinkers, the most prominent being Seneca. Prudence illuminates all other virtues, and is herself virtue, primarily because she introduces the person into the state of per se moral goodness. In this text, the author substitutes *discretio* (Holmberg 1929: 94) where the original text of Cicero had used *scientia*. The

act of moral wisdom lies in discernment of good and evil, rather than the science/knowledge of good and evil. This replacement of the *scientia* with *discretio* is not neutral. Discernment, its meaning replete with spiritual, monastic and patristic significance, introduces an important shift in the understanding of moral wisdom, endowing it with a divine quality of insight. Such a definition of prudence as discretion also appears in *De virtutibus et vitiis*, attributed to Alain de Lille (Delhay 1949b). Peter Abelard argues in his *Collationes* (c.1130) that prudence is not a virtue; it is science. Abelard brings together the three terms (*scientia, discretio, prudentia*) and, for the first time, links them all to the text of Aristotle's *Ethics*. The success of his argument depends upon his identification of prudence with *discretio*.<sup>7</sup> And, thanks to Abelard's arguments, Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom (*phronêsis*) is linked firmly to the monastic notion of moral perfection (*discretio*) and to *scientia*. In an elegant tour de force, the inherited Stoic-monastic frame is tied neatly to the Stagirite.

As the Latins began to read the *Ethics*, their understanding of Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom was overlaid by both Stoic and monastic assumptions about moral enlightenment, moral decision-making and moral action. Thanks to the inherited traditions, thirteenth-century thinkers read Aristotle with an eye to moral enlightenment rather than deliberative reasoning as central to the moral journey. Moral decision-making was *scientific* and opened to higher realms of divine wisdom. The human moral journey of this life was fulfilled in the afterlife, and the need for grace was essential. In short, thirteenth-century thinkers *spiritualized* the Aristotelian discussion they found in Books 1–3. It would take several decades before the Latins could methodically work through their misunderstandings and arrive at a more authentic grasp of what Aristotle means by a practical science for this life and the exact nature of practical reasoning (*phronêsis*). It is to this effort we now turn.

### **Receiving Aristotle: William of Auxerre, prudence as *discretio***

The earliest textual reception of Aristotle's practical wisdom in the thirteenth century casts it, naturally enough, in terms of the eternal *logos*. This interpretation was due to the inherited twelfth-century framework for moral living. While elements of that earlier model appear *prima facie* in a text attributed to Robert Kilwardby (Gauthier 1963: 157), or in the important *Divisio scientiarum* (Lafleur 1988: 297–355) of Arnoul de Provence (Gauthier 1963) the most intriguing example of the early reception of Aristotelian prudence as a variant of Stoic-monastic wisdom can be found in William of Auxerre's *Summa aurea* (c.1220). William's first attempt, confused by monastic *discretion*, seeks to identify the elements of a practical science.

William's text opens with a question: is prudence science or virtue? This was the question that William of Conches and Peter Abelard had struggled to resolve. William of Auxerre first explores the extent to which prudence might be science, making use of several Stoic elements we have already seen. Prudence is a type of science that unifies theory and praxis by means of an application of the good *simpliciter* to the particular good. What's more, prudence involves no deliberation among several goods, nor does it identify a virtuous mean between two extremes. The single prudential judgment, understood as an application to the particular, is itself comprised of two distinct rational acts. A first, theoretical insight about the good serves as a necessary condition for the second, practical conclusion about *this* good.

William suggests another way to mediate between the science–virtue debate by introducing two distinct acts of judgment that both belong to prudential reasoning. These two acts distinguish the higher level of rational insight from that of moral action and recalls how, for the monastic tradition, discretion was connected to moderation. The first judgment, *iudicium discretivum*, is a scientific act of rational discernment. The second is an act of moral



determination, *iudicium diffinitivum*, which belongs to the *virtue* of prudence (*Summa aurea* 3.20.1, William of Auxerre 1986: 389). William's distinction between these two acts of judgment (both linked to prudence) actually enables him to cut through two thorny difficulties. First, he has now integrated two troublesome aspects of prudence (as science or virtue) that had vexed twelfth-century thinkers to make for a fuller frame for the moral domain. Second, he has linked his discussion of prudence to the two dimensions of monastic *discretio*: moral insight and moderation in action. William has taken a very small integrative step in the direction of carving out a practical science that can inform moral action. It is only a small step, however, since he is still within the monastic lens when he calls it discretion.

More importantly for William and for what will follow, however, is the grounding of moral judgment in solid scientific reasoning. By identifying prudence with *science* he can guarantee the conformity of moral judgment to the norm of reason, that is, to the divine will (*Summa aurea* 3.20.2, William of Auxerre 1986: 394). Once grounded on this higher conformity, prudence as *virtue* governs the second, lesser realm of concrete action, itself measured against the intermediate particular judgment. The process of moral reasoning still moves from higher to lower (rather than lower to higher): from the divine will to moral judgment, and from moral judgment to concrete moral action. Practical wisdom now involves both science and virtue, integrating all three levels of moral reasoning. William achieves his solution by means of a deft integration of Stoic, biblical and Aristotelian sources all within the larger monastic frame. He concludes that the judgment of prudence (discretion) brings human willing into communion with the divine.

Synderesis, the law written on the heart, is revealed not in the higher act, but in the second act: the *iudicium diffinitivum*. This act expresses the divine will, as the monastic maxim of moderation urged. In addition to the monastic framework of moral wisdom, Stoic sources have helped with this solution. With Cicero and Augustine, William names the parts of prudence as memory, understanding and providence; with Macrobius, he identifies the philosophical division of prudence into monastic, economic and politics (*Summa aurea* 3.20.2, William of Auxerre 1986: 394).<sup>8</sup> Prudence stands as the head of the virtues and is, as we have seen, linked to moral science.

Despite his best efforts, William fails to integrate fully the realms of moral knowledge with moral action. The first act of judgment (*iudicium discretivum*) is an act of moral insight, yet it falls outside of the voluntary. So this higher act does not really belong to *praxis*. The second act (*iudicium diffinitivum*) is voluntary and constitutes the domain of praise and blame. With his emphasis on moral insight, and with the Stoic overtones already apparent in this text, one would expect William to identify prudence with discretion, the higher act of rational judgment (*iudicium discretivum*). However, he does not. The initial moral insight is closer to scientific enlightenment, uniting human reason to divine will and to the order of nature. This act of insight, while scientific, is not *practical* science in the sense that Aristotle would have understood the term (ethics as the science of *praxis*), because it aligns with a higher order of nature rather than with the contingent realm.

Once rational insight identifies the good, the act of determination (*iudicium diffinitivum*) makes the moral decision. This second act, William affirms, is proper to prudence and recalls Cicero's definition of Roman prudence. By aligning prudence more to the realm of virtue than to science, William links it to the order of execution rather than to insight. Prudence now commands the execution of the morally good act, previously determined by higher enlightened insight. William's prudence belongs to the contingent arena of action alone and is closer to the cardinal virtue of prudence as described by Cicero and Ambrose.

William's distinction between the two dimensions of judgment (discretion and determination) prepares the way for the slightly later and more developed *Summa de bono* (c.1231–36) by Philip the Chancellor. Where William had divided the acts of rational judgment into scientific and virtuous (discretion and prudence), Philip views prudence singly, yet according to two operations (judgment/reasoning and choice/willing). Philip's distinction between the dual aspects of prudence, the scientific and practical, provides the conceptual breakthrough that enables later thinkers to grasp the Aristotelian distinction between theory and praxis. Nevertheless, several vestiges of the Stoic frame still remain. Similar to William, Philip introduces no deliberative step into moral reasoning. The judgment of what should be done is followed immediately by action. This immediacy recalls the Stoic moral proposition which expresses itself in action. Philip concludes his study by clarifying that the true nature of prudence is determined on the basis of its relationship to action: when judgment results in action, prudence is a virtue; when it does not result in action, it is science (*De prudentia* q. 1, Philip the Chancellor 1985: 759). We are still quite far from Aristotle.

Now science, explains Philip, can be of several sorts. A science such as geometry has nothing to do with virtue. Others dispose us toward virtue, but in a remote manner, such as contemplation of divine works which dispose us to love God. Still others have a more direct influence on virtue, and here we find moral science which explains our duties and prepares us to deliberate well. Scriptural teachings, for example, as well as classical moral texts can be sources for this type of moral science. Finally, at the most immediate level to virtue we find "scientific prudence": the reasoning and science of what one ought to do. The act of scientific prudence directs the act of prudence as virtue (*De prudentia* q. 1, Philip the Chancellor 1985: 762).

This first phase of reception is confused, and rightly so. Stoic sources and monastic authorities are visible and influential in the interpretation. With only the first books of the *Ethics*, William and Philip could only understand "practical wisdom" through their own lens of spiritual wisdom, informed by Stoic-monastic traditions that included discernment, moderation and enlightenment. The subsequent interpretive phase would prove critical in arriving at a clearer and more authentic understanding of Aristotle.

### **Interpreting Aristotle: Albert the Great and *phronêsis***

Albert the Great's writing on ethics reflects the growing awareness of the Latins who read the complete Aristotelian text between 1225 and 1250. Tracking Albert's sustained reflection on the key term, *fronesis*, we see how an initial Stoic-framed reading (in the *De bono*) grounds his naturalist ethics on the rationality of nature and natural law. For Albert, Stoic natural law plays a key role in separating Aristotle's philosophical ethics from moral theology.

In the *De bono*, Albert presents *prudentia* with all the Stoic characteristics belonging to that cardinal virtue. In Treatise 4 (Albert the Great 1951–: XXVIII 215–58), he points out the difference between *phronêsis* (of which Aristotle speaks) and *prudentia*, the cardinal virtue of the contingent good. Unlike Arnoul of Provence, Albert does not turn *phronêsis* into a theological or contemplative virtue. He situates *phronêsis* at a higher cognitive level, beyond the order of contingent events and action. Since the contingent order of events, according to Albert, already belongs to *prudentia*, it cannot also belong to *phronêsis*.

Albert also asks "Is prudence a virtue?" He answers that prudence belongs to the genus of intrinsic goods found both in reason and the will. It is generated in the manner of any virtue, by means of actions, and not merely in reason alone (ibid.: 219). It consists of praise and blame and deals with the difficult good. The act proper to prudence is a manifold of

understanding, discernment, choice and flight from the world. All these attributes echo the twelfth-century Stoic tradition of moral wisdom as Albert and his immediate predecessors received it.

In a distinction which will later appear within his general discussion of *ethica-docens* and *utens*, Albert clarifies that the term “prudence” actually identifies both science and virtue. As science, prudence refers to knowledge gained from study and learned teaching (*doctrina*). Despite its scientific character, however, it is more like rhetoric than mathematics (*ibid.*: 220). Its purpose is to teach what ought to be done by means of persuasion, not deduction. Since not all prudence is for the sake of contemplation, there is also another prudence: prudence-virtue. This is generated from experience.

As unifying moral virtue, prudence determines choice in light of the end. It is directive of moral living. Consequently all virtue, in order to be virtue, must be directed by prudence and cannot be separated from reason (*ibid.*: 232). Such rational direction involves multiple acts of understanding, discernment and choice. In his effort to emphasize the activity of prudence as “practical wisdom,” Albert splits its activity into two stages. Prior to any act of choice, prudence examines and counsels according to the law. This counsel resembles a type of discernment, focused upon what is above. Following this, it commands the act of choice (*sententia de faciendo*), handing down a type of law to be followed (*ibid.*: 234). We recognize here the two acts of judgment seen earlier in William of Auxerre which echo monastic practice: an act of discretion or insight followed by an act of determination. What is new, however, is the way Albert links the acts of prudence to choice of means in light of the end. This is closer to Aristotle’s understanding of the act of practical wisdom.

As had William before him, Albert appeals to Cicero’s authority (*Inv.* 2.160) when he frames the diverse activity of prudence according to acts of memory, understanding and providence. Past experiences influence moral judgment, since they are part of the counsel given by reason. Understanding is identified as the highest and most important act of prudence. Albert links it to divine illumination within the soul, penetrating all rational activity and enabling the distinction of good from evil. Providence considers future consequences in light of the present situation. In an attempt to reconcile both prudence and *phronêsis*, Albert identifies prudence with the particular and contingent act of choice based upon experience. The more scientific level of reasoning, *phronêsis*, transcends temporal constraints to imitate science of an eternal, timeless realm of rational nature (Albert the Great 1951–: XXVIII 257).

Oddly, Albert attributes this understanding of *phronêsis* as a scientific *habitus* of natural and positive law to Aristotle. Commenting on Aristotle’s division of intellectual virtues (*sapientia*, *phronêsis* and *intelligentia*), Albert distinguishes *prudentia* from the higher *phronêsis* by means of their mode of reasoning. *Prudentia* reasons *quia* (inductively, inferentially), while *phronêsis* (like *sapientia*) makes its determinations on the basis of *propter quid* reasoning (deductively). Within this *propter quid* dimension, however, a new distinction emerges: *phronêsis* reasons on the basis of law, while *sapientia* reasons teleologically, from the end or goal (*ibid.*).

Albert places *phronêsis* at the level of law, midway between the contingent judgments of prudence and the higher, teleological understanding of theoretical wisdom. Situated between these two and by virtue of its mode of reasoning, *phronêsis* is actually closer to the realm of *sapientia* than to that of *prudentia*. As law, *phronêsis* deals with eternal, necessary propositions, reasoning downward in the manner of application of general principles to particular situations.

As Albert attempts to make sense of *phronêsis* in light of Stoic *prudentia* he clearly understands that, in some way, the two are not identical. He takes Cicero to task for having a far too broad understanding of *phronêsis* that includes both *sapientia* and *intelligentia* and points out

that this is not Aristotle's position (ibid.: 257–8). *Phronêsis* is not a theological or contemplative virtue. However, even though Albert removes the theological dimension from his discussion of *phronêsis*, he has not yet fully understood Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom. It will only be in his *Super Ethica* (6.7) that Albert recognizes that "*phronêsis enim est prudentia*" (Albert the Great 1951–: XIV 443) and corrects the Stoic notion in light of a clearer Aristotelian understanding.

Even with the theological discussion set aside, Albert failed to understand Aristotle's particular notion of *phronêsis* as practical wisdom that holds "for the most part." For Albert *phronêsis* captured the higher dimension of moral reflection, something like the Stoic understanding of natural law, an eternal *logos* or an Augustinian divine will. In each of these cases, an intermediate level of law mediates moral reasoning. At the time of the *De bono*, Albert had not sufficiently separated Aristotle's thought from the larger and more influential context of *discretio/scientia* he inherited from his predecessors in the late twelfth century and the first decades of the thirteenth. Natural law remained central to Albert's interpretation of prudence, even later, once he realized that there is no difference (in Aristotle) between *phronêsis* and *prudentia*. Albert retained the foundation in natural law, not because he confused *phronêsis* with prudence or even because he confused philosophical with theological reasoning. Albert *needed* a natural foundation for ethics as a science. Natural law gave him that foundation.

Three important aspects about the foundational status of prudence are highlighted by Albert in his later *Super Ethica*. All three reveal the extent to which Albert had separated Aristotle's intention (this world) from that of theology (the world to come), but had not yet entirely left his Stoic-informed assumptions. First, prudence regulates questions of human civic excellence and its domain is that of this world. The operation of prudence extends to a specific and limited dimension of human life. It in no way threatens the superiority of speculation or contemplation as the highest human activity. Understood in this foundational sense, prudence contains the end of human behavior. Its purpose is to lead to those actions which are good in themselves and wherein the purpose of the action is contained in the action itself. Here we recognize clearly the Stoic theory of virtue as applied to earthly happiness ("virtue is its own reward"), as distinct from an Aristotelian identification of virtue as the mean between two extremes, the result of deliberation.

Second, as the central intellectual virtue of moral living, prudence is the foundational rational activity which constitutes moral responsibility. The ability to deliberate in light of a goal is the heart of moral life. This ability belongs to the intellect and to the virtue of prudence. Ignorance and falsehood can impinge upon the operation of prudential reasoning and are the primary source of moral evil.

Third, as directional and regulatory for moral living, prudence is the foundation for the virtues. It confers upon the virtues an *esse virtutem*. In the absence of deliberation and prudential direction, any virtue is capable of harming moral goodness. In his closing remarks on Book 6, Albert states that prudence mediates between the moral and speculative virtues, comparing its relationship to wisdom with that of a duke to his sovereign (*Super Ethica* 6.18; Albert the Great 1951–: XIV 513). Since all moral living is in light of wisdom (and this of course as contemplation), prudence functions here as mediator, bridging the gap between theoretical wisdom (*sapientia*) and virtue.

Throughout his teaching, Albert separated philosophical reasoning from theological reflection and placed *phronêsis* at the elevated level of science, either speculative or legal. Albert affirmed that Aristotle's *phronêsis* is not identical to Cicero's prudence. And yet he conferred on Aristotelian *phronêsis* the Stoic aspect of prudence: understanding of the eternal *logos* and its relationship to divine will within natural law. Consequently, while he was able

to separate the Aristotelian project from the beatific vision, Albert never really left the realm of Stoic foundationalism. He never fully understood the Aristotelian position on practical reasoning and wisdom. Albert continued to tie prudence to a higher level of scientific reasoning, as had his predecessors.

### **Integrating Aristotle: Thomas Aquinas and *recta ratio agibilium***

Thomas Aquinas used Aristotle's discussion of happiness as human perfection (in *Ethics* Bk 10) to focus his moral analysis and to integrate rationality and virtue. Thomas's overall organization of the domain of moral wisdom owes much to his reading and reflection upon other thinkers, among them Cicero as well as Seneca (Verbeke 1983; Spanneut 1984). Like his teacher before him, Aquinas concentrates on Aristotle's *Ethics* as a naturalistic, anthropocentric moral theory which grounds moral goodness in right appetite and moral rectitude in right reasoning. What's more, his grasp of the Aristotelian distinction between a theoretical and practical science enabled him to pursue the discussion of ethics as distinct from moral theology (Wieland 1982a: 661). A practical science, ethics finds its goal in operation, and not in speculation. This does not, however, imply that there is no scientific quality to ethics. Ethics contains principles as well as conclusions derived both from principles and from reflection upon human experience. This more generalized realm of moral science informs moral decisions in light of the end of moral action: human perfection or happiness (Wieland 1982b).

In *Sententia libri Ethicorum* Book 6, Thomas addresses the relationship between rationality and desire, foundational to a practical science. His accurate grasp of Aristotle's notion of *phronêsis* can be clearly seen in the first two *lectiones*. The questions he raises about the text reveal, as well, the continued influence of Stoicism on his interpretation of Aristotle. In each text, Thomas identifies a dubious move on the part of Aristotle that reveals how central to thirteenth-century understanding the Stoic legacy had become and how difficult it was to shake off.

In the first *lectio*, Thomas deals with the distinction between scientific and contingent truth proper to prudence. This was the issue raised by William of Auxerre in his *Summa aurea*. In the second, he addresses the question of moral foundationalism. Here we see the issue for Albert the Great's *De bono*. In both, Aquinas departs from his predecessors' Stoic understanding of prudence to offer an accurate reading of Aristotelian *phronêsis* as that virtue of *praxis* dealing with contingent matters. In other words, the Stoic context or backdrop helps to raise questions that Aquinas clarifies and answers by means of a deeper reflection on the Aristotelian text.

The first text (*lectio* 1) deals with the nature of scientific knowledge and *praxis*. Here Aristotle distinguishes scientific and estimative parts within the intellect. Both belong to the rational soul: the scientific part deals with necessary truth and the estimative part with contingent truth. In his commentary, Thomas counters that in the *De anima*, Aristotle had claimed that the two parts of the intellect are active and potential. Since both active and potential intellects deal with all reality, it would be contrary to the nature of the soul if one part understood the necessary and another part the contingent.

By considering truth according to perfect (scientific) and imperfect (contingent) orders, Thomas links the common genus, truth, to a single intellect. Thus, one and only one intellectual power knows both the necessary and the contingent orders. The solution to the problematic passage involves understanding contingent reality in a twofold manner: according to universal concepts and according to reality in the concrete. In this way, universal concepts of contingent things are immutable. What's more, scientific demonstrations can be given regarding

them. Contingent states of affairs can belong to scientific knowledge and thus to the same part of the intellective soul as what is necessary. As they appear in the real order, however, contingent states are variable and fall under the power of conjecture or particular reason. In this way, they are the object of counsel and operation.

This example offers a salient piece of evidence for our present study. Recall that early thirteenth-century interpreters of Aristotle's text had difficulty precisely insofar as they attempted to reconcile the domains of necessary and contingent truth. Their difficulty originated from the inherited framework of Stoic moral theory and monastic practice. What this means is that the distinction between the scientific and contingent that appeared to trouble the Aristotelian text actually emerges for Thomas from within a Stoic lens, informed by the medieval legacy we have considered thus far. The problem was not in Aristotle, it was in Thomas' reading of Aristotle.

For William of Auxerre and Arnoul of Provence, the solution lay in separating *phronêsis* from prudence, linking *phronêsis* with the domain of necessary truth and prudence with contingent matters. William's two acts within reason (*iudicium discretivum* and *iudicium diffinitivum*) separated the two domains into two discrete orders of reasoning. Philip's distinction within prudence also kept the two domains apart. Albert's use of a middle range for natural law did not solve the early confusion, either. When Aquinas both raises and solves the confusion in this passage, he reveals the Stoic assumptions inherited from his predecessors. These assumptions enable him to raise and resolve a confusion whose source lies in their earlier interpretation of the Aristotelian text. The confusion is important, since it relates to the epistemic level of prudential reasoning, according to the Stagirite. The solution will disentangle Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom from the Stoic-monastic counterpart.

The second *lectio* takes up the important question of moral foundations. Thomas looks more carefully at Aristotle's affirmation that there is a mutual relationship between reasoning and appetite that grounds moral goodness. According to Aristotle, for choice to be good, reason must be true and the appetitive faculty right. This type of moral grounding in both reason and desire appears, Thomas points out, to involve circular reasoning (*Sententia libri Ethicorum* 6.2, Thomas Aquinas 1969: 337).

Recall that Albert had solved the foundationalist question by means of his recourse to Stoic natural law. He had identified *fronesis* as belonging to the higher domain of legal reasoning. For Thomas, a better solution lies more properly in a correct understanding of Aristotelian *praxis* and a proper distinction between the natural and the rational dimensions of moral living. The natural dimension deals with the end or goal, over which the appetite has no control. It is those things which are directly related to the end (the virtues) which are determined rationally via reflection upon the nature of human beings. Appetite naturally tends toward the good as its end, and to the overall good of human living as ultimate end (ibid.: 337). Accordingly, a sustained reflection upon the overall good for us reveals certain directions for living, certain qualities of character which promote this good, in the same way that good health is promoted via various activities (rest, nutrition, exercise, etc.). The truth of these qualities or characteristics of good human living is measured by the end: the human good in a complete life.

In his commentary, Thomas unpacks what looks to be a circular argument to reveal two levels of moral reasoning. The first is based upon a commitment to the goodness of human appetite and to the fundamental human desire for integration, fulfillment and complete satisfaction. Based upon the rational nature of the human species, the true human end or goal, that is, a fulfilled life, can only be reached through rational action. This insight about rational nature introduces a second level that belongs to moral reasoning: the reflexive moral assessment. While appetite governs reason insofar as ultimate human fulfillment is concerned,

reason governs appetite insofar as particular choices of means toward this end are considered and evaluated.

These two levels of (1) natural moral orientation and (2) rational moral evaluation appear in the discussion of virtues as natural and as moral. Within his commentary, Thomas makes frequent use of the distinction between natural virtues (those dispositions of character which might be innate) and the moral (or rational) virtues which imply a developed moral consciousness and intentional choice. In *lectio* 11, for example, he states that there are natural qualities which are innate within certain persons. These are potentially virtuous, yet not necessarily so (*ibid.*: 375). Indeed, in the absence of prudence they can be harmful, as Albert had also claimed. It is prudence, right reasoning (*recta ratio agibilium*), that transforms natural inclinations into moral virtues (*ibid.*: 375). This transformation occurs by means of right choice, which is both according to reason (*secundum rationem*) and in the presence of reason (*cum ratione*, *ibid.*: 377). In this way, the dynamic interaction of virtue with prudence constitutes the development of character through acts of right choice.

With this solution, Thomas both avoids moral foundationalism and affirms the nature of a practical science according to Aristotle. He grounds moral judgment not in natural law, but in the double causality of right desire and right reasoning (*ibid.* 337). He refuses to give *phronêsis* the status of scientific reasoning for two reasons: practical wisdom concerns matters that are contingent in nature and, in addition, requires rectitude in the appetite.

Thomas does not ground his moral vision on natural law (Westberg 2002). Nevertheless, and despite his more accurate grasp of the nature of a practical science and practical wisdom in Aristotle, elements of Stoic inheritance linger. Thomas' presentation of prudence is squarely placed within an overall Stoic framework of eternal rational principles governing human nature and destiny (*lex naturalis*). These rational principles are manifest in the natural desire to know (*desiderium naturale*). Thomas also develops Albert's integration of the practical syllogism into terms belonging to Stoic framework, i.e. *synderesis*, natural law and conscience (Verbeke 1983: 70). Aristotle's subjective discussion of human excellence is given objective metaphysical measure by means of the rational and natural order, itself perfected by theology and revelation. Thomas comes to a clearer understanding of Aristotelian ethics by shifting the Stoic framework out of ethics (where Albert situates it) and into metaphysics.

## Conclusions

Our investigation of the reception of Aristotle's *Ethics* has demonstrated the power of the Stoic lens for these early readers of this important text. Yet despite the clearer grasp of Aristotle achieved by Aquinas, Stoic moral influence would remain significant throughout the century. Indeed, after 1246, Franciscan masters such as Roger Bacon and Bonaventure of Bagnoregio would enthusiastically embrace Seneca's works and use him as a moral model (Spanneut 1973: 196–9). Indeed, these Franciscan thinkers found in Seneca's writings the sort of presentation of key moral elements (self-control, moderation in use, tranquility of mind) that belong to this, more voluntarist tradition. And, as the decades would lead up to the Condemnations of 1270 and 1277, Aristotle's intellectualist ethical model would find a significant competitor in Seneca's moral vision. As it had at the outset of the thirteenth century, Stoic moral models offered another approach to the human goal of fulfillment (Ingham 2007: 84–102).

Thus Stoicism proves to be key to our understanding of moral discussions in the thirteenth century. As we have seen, the interpretive confusion between *prudens* and *sapiens* remained through the earliest translations of Aristotle's *Ethics*. This confusion subsequently framed a

discussion of Aristotle based on a model of moral enlightenment that was inherited from twelfth-century Stoic and monastic intuitions. According to this model, moral development focused on the intellectual ascent to cosmic truth. Once illuminated by a higher order, the sage understood the basic moral principles from which law is deduced. Concrete actions could be determined on the basis of these higher, universal principles. This model of moral wisdom provided the conditions within which Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom would be tied to *sapientia*, a higher theoretical wisdom. The model was only strengthened by spiritual and biblical notions of wisdom as discretion.

This inherited Stoic-monastic frame influenced the earliest interpreters who, like William of Auxerre, separated Aristotelian *phronêsis* from the contingent realm and linked it to contemplation and speculation. The influence of this frame is also seen in Albert the Great's *Summa de bono*, where *phronêsis* is identified with natural law. Albert's ethical project, much larger than separating philosophical from theological domains (Müller 2001), involved a metaphysical grounding of natural moral philosophy. Despite his enhanced understanding of Aristotle's intention to frame a practical science in his *Super Ethica*, Albert continued to present prudence according to a framework of scientific reasoning and legal knowledge, more Stoic than Aristotelian.

The absence of an adequate distinction between science and virtue in Albert's texts did not help the medieval confusion between the *prudens* and *sapiens*, inherited from the twelfth century and reinforced by the early translations of the *Ethics*. While he understood that Aristotelian practical wisdom is not Cicero's practical wisdom, and he realized that the central question of practical wisdom deals with the intellectual virtue proper to a contingent world, Albert developed his understanding on the basis of Stoic natural law and the *logos* which unites nature, reason and wisdom. The early distinction Albert presents between prudence (proper to moral decisions and learned from experience) and *phronêsis* (proper to scientific or legal reasoning) gives ethics a foundation to stand on, yet ties Albert to the earlier moral framework.

Thomas Aquinas integrates several key moral traditions (Stoic, Aristotelian, patristic). He explores particular and contingent human choice in light of rationality which transcends the individual. He makes use of Stoic intuitions about the rationality of nature, yet these now play a metaphysical role. The natural law tradition Thomas inherited from his predecessors enhances his affirmation of *desiderium naturale*, or natural desire to know, and is itself of Stoic provenance.<sup>9</sup> For Thomas, the human natural desire to understand (articulated by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*) reveals the Stagirite's commitment to that rationality which both grounds the objective moral order and makes possible the existence of a state of perfection, happiness. Because of this stronger metaphysical and Stoic commitment to the rationality of nature and human natural desire, Thomas can accept Aristotle's discussion of practical reasoning and practical truth.<sup>10</sup> He can take into account both the lack of certainty within all moral decisions and, at the same time, the demands of rationality which underpin human moral judgment. He can base appetite in sound reasoning and reasoning in right desire.

Once he has accurately captured Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom, Thomas develops more fully the reflexive nature of prudential judgment as self-conscious moral orientation. Prudence as practical reason guides the development of moral character and brings together the domains of the necessary and contingent within the act of judgment. Aquinas' presentation of the centrality of moral virtue both for character and for the appropriate judgment of prudence reaffirms the natural basis of the moral realm. Natural human virtues are an expression of natural goodness which guides the development of all nature. The rational human virtues, particularly prudence, enable the person to participate in the rational principle



at the heart of all reality. The human capacity for moral goodness is guaranteed by the human capacity for rational and self-conscious moral reflection. The human desire for happiness is guaranteed and fulfilled by revelation and by reflection upon the divine nature as ultimate object of human longing.

Like Albert, Thomas presents a moral discussion which capitalizes on the rationality of nature and upon human self-consciousness. But also like Albert, Thomas comes to a deeper understanding of Aristotle thanks in part to Stoic intuitions that lie beyond the domain of the moral order. Against the backdrop of Stoic moral wisdom, of the efforts of translators and texts, of the monastic and patristic legacy, Aquinas grasps the particular nature of ethics as a practical science, along with the particular contours of Aristotelian prudence as *recta ratio agibilium*, proper to the contingent order of human action. His interpretation, though closer to Aristotle than any of the others, still gives evidence of the influence and importance of the legacy of medieval Stoicism.

The Stoic moral lens played a central role in the reception, interpretation and integration of Aristotle's *Ethics* and, importantly, in the medieval understanding of *phronêsis*, practical wisdom. Stoic intuitions informed and were informed by patristic and monastic reflection and practice on virtue and decision-making. When Aristotle's *Ethics* arrived in the West, it did not enter a textual or moral vacuum. Medieval translators and readers approached this text from within their own frame of reference. They both understood and misunderstood what practical wisdom meant for Aristotle. Consequently, despite several mistaken attempts to render the Stagirite more readable to the Latins, their efforts helped as well as hindered the project of understanding the Aristotelian notion of practical wisdom.

## Notes

- 1 This would tie it, obviously, to Augustine of Hippo: "Lex vero aeterna est ratio divina vel voluntas Dei ordinem naturalem conservari iubens, perturbari vetans," *Contra Faustum* (Zycha 1891: 621).
- 2 See Cicero, *Inv.* 2.160; also *Off.* 1.153. For a fuller discussion of this, see Ingham 2005.
- 3 Cicero transposes cosmic and ethical natural law into a legal principle in his *De legibus* 1.6. He identifies law, reason and nature as the unchanging and eternal principle of cosmic order. The inspiration of the wise (*prudens*), natural law is spirit and reason. Augustine emphasizes how eternal law is not the work of human reason, but of divine reason and divine will (*Contra Faustum* 22.27, in Zycha 1891: 621).
- 4 Such as those of Ambrose of Milan, who, in *De officiis* 1.24, identified prudence as the cardinal virtue of "intellectual striving," and John Cassian, who in *Institutiones* 5.41, described the moral sage as *prudens discretio*.
- 5 See Cassian, *Collationes* (Petschenig 2004: II n. 4, pp. 43 and 44, respectively).
- 6 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica canticorum* 49 n. 5 (Bernard of Clairvaux 2000: 336).
- 7 Peter Abelard, *Dialogus inter philosophum, Iudaeum et Christianum* §115 (Peter Abelard 1970: 117).
- 8 See Cicero, *Inv.* 2.160; Augustine, *Div. quaest.* 83.31.1; Macrobius, *In Somn.* 1.8.
- 9 That is, Thomas makes use of the innate rational precepts that are foundational to legal reasoning, without embracing a legalistic foundation for ethics or presenting a moral theory grounded in obligation. He does, nevertheless, view precepts as having a significant moral role to play. In this way, and with the help of the Stoic metaphysics of the rationality of nature, Thomas brings together both the virtue and precept ethics. Our study offers additional support for Hibbs's (2001: 9–10) thesis on the need to widen the scope of the study of Aquinas. We propose that this involves not simply consideration of his theological views, but also looking beyond Aristotle for significant philosophical sources that play a role in his moral vision. Stoicism is clearly among them.
- 10 Our conclusions in this study would also expand upon the explanations of practical reasoning given by Daniel Westberg (2002: 147–64) and Thomas Hibbs (2001: 74–5) to include more foundational Stoic influences, especially in the account of decision-making that does not involve deliberation.

## Further reading

For general overviews of the reception of Stoicism in the Middle Ages see Verbeke (1983) and Ingham (2007). For the late Middle Ages note also Ebbesen (2004) and Ingham (2005). On Stoicism and Thomas Aquinas see Spanneut (1984) and Verbeke (1990).

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## **PART II**

# **Renaissance and Reformation**

## 8

# THE RECOVERY OF STOICISM IN THE RENAISSANCE

*Ada Palmer*

While classical Greek philosophy had concentrated on the eudaimonist promise of cultivating happiness of the soul, and medieval philosophy on guiding the soul to the eternal happiness of heaven, Renaissance philosophy added to these the more worldly goal of ending the war, factionalism and instability that ravaged Europe, and especially Italy, in the twelfth through sixteenth centuries, by recreating the sciences, society and moral education which had achieved the Pax Romana. Two hundred and six years of pan-European peace was a golden dream to a vulnerable city like Florence, which might endure six bloody regime changes in as many decades. This classical revival, which we now call humanism, with its expectation that philosophy would have an immediate and practical public effect, found some precedent in the political applications of Roman Stoicism, but was far more ambitious in its hopes for broad social transformation, and would not be surpassed in its focus on the practical applications of philosophy until Francis Bacon and, eventually, the Enlightenment.

The Renaissance recovery of Stoicism, like that of all major classical sects, had two sides. The more glamorous was the physical rediscovery of ancient tomes that had languished for centuries in dark library corners where the dust caked thick. Such discoveries were supplemented by the arrival in the West of classics that had long circulated in the East, in Greek or in Arabic translations. It had always been possible for European scholars to get sources from the East, and indeed it was always possible for them to visit remote European libraries and brush the dust off neglected classics. Thus, this physical recovery was the product of a revolution in mindset rather than technology, sparked by Petrarch (1304–1374) and his peers who convinced scholars and, just as important, wealthy patrons that glory, truth, virtue and the peace and power of Rome hid in the written remnants of antiquity.

In parallel to this physical recovery of texts was a process of synthetic recovery. To remake their golden age, humanists wanted to assemble complete, or at least complete-seeming, descriptions of the beliefs and practices of the classical schools whose names had never stopped being famous. This involved harvesting information, not just from new texts, but from the familiar authorities who had circulated consistently throughout the Middle Ages. Thus, while knowledge of Stoicism was greatly expanded by such newly resurrected voices as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, it was also greatly transformed by humanists rereading, with their new agenda, the same Seneca that their medieval grandparents had known. Equally significant were tidbits about Stoicism harvested from authors – some new, some familiar – who were

not themselves Stoics. Cicero, Dio Chrysostum, Diogenes Laertius, Galen, Suetonius whose biographical writings helped humanists judge the character of ancients and thereby how well they lived by their philosophies, even commentators, grammarians and church fathers contributed fragments, which were meticulously gleaned and combined with Stoic sources to produce what was less a contiguous portrait of Stoicism than a mosaic cobbled together from all available pieces.

Two further bodies of sources contributed substantially which we now exclude from our own: spurious material, and the Renaissance tendency toward syncretic conflation.

### **Spuria and forgeries**

In the Renaissance, spurious, forged and misattributed Stoic texts outnumbered and out-circulated authentic sources. Works falsely attributed to Seneca had long enjoyed popularity, foremost among them the supposed letters exchanged between Seneca and St Paul. Such late antique and medieval forgeries commixed with real, classical works misattributed to Seneca, like the *Octavia* and the works of Seneca the Elder, who was not fully differentiated from the Younger until the seventeenth century (Hankins and Palmer 2008: 37–8). While texts like these clouded impressions of authors whose works were available, for others these dubious and misattributed sources were sometimes, paradoxically, the best window available. For example, the second- or third-century Latin dialogue *Altercatio Hadriani et Epicteti*, published in 1510 with the infamous forgeries of Annius of Viterbo (1432–1502),<sup>1</sup> was a dubious source associated with an even more dubious editor. Yet, since its unknown ancient author had probably at least read Epictetus, the dialogue was closer than anything else available, and is hardly more removed from its subject than are the biographies of Diogenes Laertius, which remain a backbone of present scholarship. Similarly, centuries before Diogenes Laertius began to circulate, parts of his *Lives* were known through the popular medieval compendium *Liber de vita et moribus philosophorum*, which was partly based on a twelfth-century Latin translation.

Seneca's *spuria* merit independent discussion. The *Epistulae Pauli et Senecae* were a set of fourteen letters supposedly exchanged between Seneca and St Paul, in which Seneca expresses support for Christian thought and sympathy for victims of Nero's persecution. They probably date to the fourth century, and were the backbone of medieval attempts to reframe Seneca as a Christian martyr (Ker 2009). *De quattuor virtutibus cardinalibus* is the *Formula vitae honestae* of St Martin of Braga (d. 579), still considered valuable today because it is probably based on a real lost work of Seneca (Ott 1910: vol. 9). It was usually accompanied by *De moribus*, a collection of 145 maxims, sometimes falsely attributed to Martin of Braga, but probably the work of an unknown Christian author before 657. Another maxim collection called *Proverbia* (or *Sententiae*) consists of the maxims of Publilius Syrus – a first-century BC Latin author and mime, originally a slave from Syria – which had been mixed with pieces of the *De moribus*. The authenticity of these four texts was challenged by Erasmus in 1515, who excluded them from his new *Opera Omnia*, but that by no means ended their popularity.

The short spurious *De paupertate* remained unchallenged longer, a compilation of Senecan comments on voluntary poverty gathered from the *Epistulae ad Lucilium*. Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) was the first scholar to reject the authenticity of another work, *De remediis fortuitorum*, a classical treatise on resisting the assaults of fortune; arguments that this might be authentic Seneca are still made today (Newman 1988). Lipsius was also first to argue that Seneca did not write the historical play *Octavia* (Pease 1920). Only in the seventeenth century were the *Controversiae et suasoriae* of Seneca the Elder firmly separated from the corpus of the Younger. There is nothing firm, however, about the exclusion of these *spuria*, since authorship is still

debated, current scholarship still reflects interpretations founded in eras when they were canonical, and editions which still include them crop up in used book stores often, to the confusion of the unwary.

The Renaissance also produced new *spuria*, such as the *Libro áureo de Marco Aurelio*. Written by Antonio de Guevara (1480–1545), a Franciscan companion of Emperor Charles V, the volume is a didactic fiction in the education of princes genre, taking the form of a *vita* and letters of Marcus Aurelius “Emperor, most wise philosopher, and most eloquent orator.” It invokes a supposed Florentine manuscript in order to pass for a rediscovered classical work. First published in Spanish in Seville in 1528, it was popular enough to be pirated in Valencia the same year, and frequently reprinted (Kraye 2000; Rivero 2004: 14 n. 1). It was translated into French, English, Italian, and eventually German; the Italian version in 1543 sold out two editions within a year, and was even reproduced by the prestigious Aldine press in 1546. With the familiar Aldine dolphin and anchor on its title page, the forgery is identical in presentation to the octavo classics which Aldus had made the backbone of humanist libraries, tempting buyers to use the little volume to substitute for the *Meditations*, which were not printed until 1559. Serious Renaissance scholars knew to exclude Antonio de Guevara, and the spurious Seneca was gradually sorted out, yet this chapter would paint a very false portrait of Renaissance Stoicism if it were to begin, as is traditional, with the canonical Stoics, relegating to an appendix the unexpected companions which preceded, accompanied and out-circulated those in use today.

Petrarch was ahead of his peers by recognizing that the *De quattuor virtutibus* was not genuine Seneca (Kraye 2001: 22), but his 1348 letter to Seneca (*Familiares* [Fam.] XXIV.5) demonstrates perfectly how spurious and peripheral sources transformed Renaissance reading. Petrarch hails Seneca as an “incomparable teacher of moral philosophy” citing Plutarch who, he says, in comparing Greek and Latin excellence in different arenas, comparing Virgil to Homer, Cicero to Demosthenes, Caesar to Alexander, admits that the Greeks are wholly inferior in moral philosophy having no one to match Seneca. This is spurious already, since no such passage exists in Plutarch, and Petrarch did not have Plutarch, only the medieval fabrication *Institutio Traiani* (Petrarch 1910: 55–6). Most of Petrarch’s letter treats his distress at Seneca’s dangerous choice to remain so close to Nero. He criticizes Seneca for inviting disaster by writing the *Octavia* criticizing Nero while remaining in his power, and for serving and flattering someone he thought so wicked. Petrarch acknowledges that the attribution of *Octavia* to Seneca may be wrong, but his characterization of Seneca’s opinion of Nero is clearly based on the *Octavia* throughout the letter. Seeking some higher motive for Seneca’s choice to remain at Nero’s side, Petrarch suggests that he might have thought it was important to persecute the strange and dangerous new Christian cult; but he rejects that, citing the Pauline letters. Petrarch laments that Seneca did not pursue his friendship with Paul far enough to become a martyr himself, and dates the letter in the 1348th year from the birth of “Him Whom I do not know whether you knew or not.”

Petrarch’s use of sources is particularly telling. Suetonius and the *Octavia* are the dominant voices by far (Petrarch 1910: 55–68). Petrarch draws once each upon the *Tristia*, Martial and Dante, on some of his own works, and adds the spurious Plutarch and Pauline letters, though he likely also had in mind references to the Seneca-Paul correspondence in Jerome (*De viris illustribus* 12) and Augustine (*Ep.* 153.14; cf. Petrarch 1910: 66 n. 68). Seneca’s own voice appears only in two allusions to the *De clementia* and two extracts from the letters, both chosen for references to other figures, Cicero (Seneca, *Ep.* 40; Petrarch 1910: 55 n. 1) and Cleanthes (Seneca, *Ep.* 107; Petrarch 1910: 57 n. 7). There is practically no Seneca in this letter to Seneca, but there is firm confirmation that Seneca merits the title “prince of moral

philosophers.” Petrarch’s impassioned exploration made the question of why the greatest authority on virtue would serve at the right hand of a tyrant central for the reading of thousands of later students who would approach Seneca – or what they thought was Seneca – because Petrarch told them to. Even after the *Octavia* left Seneca’s corpus, Petrarch’s letter remained. His question, based on a misattribution older than the Black Death, is still discussed in twenty-first century biographies of Seneca (Ker 2009).

### Syncretism and conflation

The second source which made Renaissance Stoicism very different from both medieval and modern understandings was syncretic conflation, the tendency of humanists to presume that ancient schools were largely compatible, both with each other, and with Christianity. Many factors contributed to this attitude, not least the effectively reverse-chronological experience of a humanist’s philosophical and religious education. The Christianity which saturated Renaissance culture was absorbed in childhood, and with it key concepts: providence, the soul, the afterlife, the weight of sin, and the divine depicted as heavenly light in every altarpiece, illuminated capital and street-corner Madonna. As later lessons brought more complicated questions – determinism, theodicy, the relationship between the perceptible world and the divine – the answers which Renaissance society provided were heavily tinted by such creations as Dante’s half-Virgilian hell, and Thomas Aquinas’s half-Aristotelian logic, both recent, chimeric hybrids of ancient and medieval. These voices, or at least their diffusing ideas, were imbibed well before the young humanist first laid eyes on Seneca and Plato, and found in these pagan authors providence, determinism, the afterlife, the soul weighed down by heavy deeds, theodicy and passionate descriptions of divine light.

This tendency to read ancient sages as quasi-Christian was enhanced by descriptions, as vivid in Thomas Aquinas as in Plato, of a distant, illuminating, sunlike, divine One which is at the same time Wisdom, Truth, Knowledge, Goodness and all other perfections. Whether a text labeled this One “God” or not, the expectation that there was one Truth, that it was divine, that reason naturally led the soul to it, and that one who approached that Truth automatically approached virtue and divinity, led to the conclusion that all wise thinkers were approaching the same end, and differed only in which errors diluted their grasp of Truth. Pagan authorities, by this logic, had been groping toward Christianity long before Christ, though tragically without revelation to map the route. The true parts of their work would naturally fit with Christianity, and any gaps could be filled in with updated Christian cosmology. Gaps could also be filled in from other ancient schools, since Plato and Seneca had the same philosophical destination. If Stoicism lacked an afterlife model it could be filled in half from Thomas half from Plato, and if the *Republic* depicted souls choosing new lives for reincarnation and, despite the drawing of lots, each soul receives exactly the life it most desires, this obscure passage was not obscure at all to a humanist armed with Stoic-Christian providence. It was not without cause that so many medieval authors accepted Seneca as a secret Christian, and that Petrarch believed Cicero would have converted in an instant given access to the light of Christ.

Neoplatonism made this type of conflation particularly easy, because it had already commixed elements of Aristotelian, Stoic and Platonic thought. Late Roman figures like Plotinus and Porphyry, seeking to explicate what was obscure in Plato through textual exegesis, introduced elements of not only Stoic but Aristotelian, skeptical and even Epicurean thought. Porphyry and Plotinus did not consider themselves “Neoplatonists” but Platonists proper, as would Renaissance figures who believed their claims that they explained without altering,



and who saw no reason to doubt that Plato had indeed shared such Stoic positions as providence, and the Stoic idea of the universe as a contiguous, unified, rational, living divinity, a model of universally distributed thinking ensoulment which strongly informs Neoplatonic attempts to describe the layers of reality of Soul and Mind which lie between the sensible world and the supreme One. The hybrid fashioned by late antique Neoplatonists proved the perfect skeleton for Renaissance syncretic projects, like those of the Florentine Platonist Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) and his even more intellectually ambitious friend Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494). They aimed to add together all the Greeks and Romans including Stoics, and in Pico's case Hebrew and Islamic sources as well, to find a presumed whole that would unite with Christianity to form the perfect divine sunbeam that would draw wisdom-seeking souls toward God, and heal the world by reforming the Roman Church, converting all who doubted, and ending religious war forever.

Though Renaissance humanists did not know it, Neoplatonism had also cross-pollinated with Christianity directly. Apologists like Lactantius (c.250–c.320) and Arnobius (d. c.330), who might self-identify as enemies of Platonism, had engaged in lively fights with Neoplatonists, necessitating that both sides employ a common philosophical vocabulary, which facilitated the mutual shaping of how both approached such fundamentals as free will, or providence. The massively influential St Augustine (354–430), for all that he condemned Stoicism (Kraye 2001: 24–5), came to Christianity with a Neoplatonic education, and went on to explicate what was obscure in Christian theology precisely as Plotinus had explicated Plato, and with just as much Stoic and Aristotelian influence (see also Byers, this volume, Chapter 4). Later Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (fifth–sixth century), and even Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), with his integration of Plotinian adaptations of Aristotle, added further Stoic-tinted Neoplatonic layers to the Christian canon, which in turn provided precedent for Renaissance syntheses (Palmer 2002). A modern undergraduate, handed Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* and told either that it is the work of a Christian, of a pagan Stoic, or of a Platonist, will find that characterization plausible throughout the reading experience (see also Walz, this volume, Chapter 5). Renaissance students similarly could find in most Stoic texts the syncretic quasi-Christianity they expected. In the fifteenth century especially, this type of syncretic thinking affected both figures that we modern scholars point to as syncretists, and many we do not. On the most syncretic end we find Ficino with his theory of the secular revelation, that divinely inspired Greek philosophical religion was intended by God to function alongside Scripture to direct humanity toward Truth. He posited a unified genealogy of philosophical sages running from Moses, Zoroaster and Hermes Trismegistus through Orpheus and Aglaophemus to Pythagoras and Plato (*Platonic Theology* XVII.1.2, Ficino 2001–6). In his *Platonic Theology* (1469–74, published 1482) he argued that disagreements between later schools arose only because the first sages intentionally obscured their divine knowledge behind veils of poetry and metaphor to prevent the commixture of sacred with profane, a perfect framework to justify seeing and seeking hints of each ancient school in the others, and filling in all the gaps with Christianity and Plato. Ficino could then freely use any Stoic he liked while remaining, in his mind, a Platonist. Far from Ficino in terms of how he is associated with syncretism is the pugnacious philologist Lorenzo Valla. Valla was particularly interested in treating the conflicts between ancient schools when he wrote his *De voluptate* (c.1433, alternatively titled *De vero falsoque bono*), a dialogue dominated by a debate between a Stoic and an Epicurean. Valla reconstructs both schools from the sources he had on hand in the early 1400s, and when the time comes for Valla's Stoic interlocutor to outline his position, his first appeal is not to any Stoic but to Plato's *Phaedrus*, likening Virtue to a countenance whose beauty ignites love for wisdom (Valla 1977: 57). Even without a framework like Ficino's, Valla is perfectly

comfortable having Plato stand as a Stoic source, and making both his Stoic and his Epicurean happy Christians.

### Foremost on the virtues

In his *De voluptate*, Valla follows the Renaissance norm of depicting his Stoic as interested in virtue above all, a moral philosopher to the exclusion of any treatment of physics, epistemology, ontology and other questions. This depiction was typical of the Stoic imagined by the Renaissance, who was also usually more a Latin than a Greek, native to the moral and political climate of the Empire or late Republic much more than Hellenistic Athens. This was a natural product of the practical desire of humanists to rear virtuous pupils who would create their golden age, and also reflects the overwhelming status of Cicero and Seneca in late medieval and early Renaissance education. Foundational thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century authors derived their knowledge of Stoicism almost exclusively from Roman authorities. When Greek voices returned, the first scholars to encounter them had all read Cicero and Seneca as Latin language training long before they tackled Greek, and they were also intimately familiar with early Renaissance opinions of Stoics supplied by Petrarch and Dante.

Dante (1265–1321) located “Seneca the moralist” (*Seneca morale*) among the great thinkers in Limbo. Seneca sits with Cicero and “Lino” a name which many interpret as Livy rather than as the mythological son of Apollo, completing a triad of Roman voices on moral questions (*Inferno* IV, 141, Dante 1924). “Zeno” appears nearby among the Greek philosophers who stray farther from supreme Aristotle than do Socrates and Plato, including Democritus, Diogenes, Empedocles, Thales, Anaxagoras and Heraclitus (IV, 136–8). Dante does not distinguish between Zeno founder of Stoicism and Zeno author of the paradoxes, though the Stoic was discussed more frequently in sources to which Dante had access. Dante does not include any later Greek Stoics, preferring instead to take an extra line to criticize Democritus for ascribing the order of the world to chance, a distinctly un-Stoic denial of providence strongly associated with the Stoics’ Epicurean rivals, whom Dante segregates deep in a special section of Circle Six for those who deny the afterlife (X, 12–14).

By locating Seneca in Limbo, Dante declares that there was no sin in the Roman’s suicide. He does this for several others, notably Empedocles, Dido whom we see in Circle Two (V, 61–2, 85), and most conspicuously Cato the Younger, whom Dante appoints gatekeeper of Purgatory (*Purgatorio* I, 28–109). Dante presents the self-sacrificing Roman statesman as the highest embodiment of the four cardinal virtues in all of human history, the highest moral peak achievable without heavenly aid and ascent. Dante compares Cato’s decision to prefer death to a life without liberty with the choice of blessed souls preferring the liberty of heaven to the prison of Earthly existence, granting Cato’s voluntary death a hint of the nobility of martyrdom. Dante’s absolution of Seneca’s suicide likely followed the same logic, and so similar are the lives and careers of Seneca and Cato that they are often discussed in parallel by Renaissance authors, as when Petrarch offers Cato’s association with Catiline and Seneca’s with Nero as proof that “Virtue is not infected by the proximity of vice” (Petrarch 2003: 209).

Cato the Younger is himself an important part of Stoicism’s Renaissance *fortuna*. In the premodern world scholars judged philosophers as much by how they lived as what they preached, and judgments about a philosophical school might depend just as much on an ancient’s biography as on any text. Seneca’s story was perfect even if de-Christianized, a life of unmarred virtue and selfless duty, risking and ultimately losing his life in his efforts to guard Rome from a corrupted age. Cicero cannot be called a straightforward Stoic, since he

pits interlocutors for multiple schools against each other, often with a result favoring skepticism over any doctrine, but the Stoic voice often feels strongest, an impression greatly enhanced in Renaissance eyes by the nearly exact parallel between Cicero's life and career and Seneca's. Two made a pattern, and even if Cato the Younger was no Stoic author, his formulaically Stoic life made a third exemplar which could be invoked as proof of the good results of the Stoic moral attitudes so popular in Rome. If, in Renaissance expectations, the product of a Platonic education was a heaven-bound sage like Plotinus or Augustine, and the product of an Aristotelian education was a divine logician like Theophrastus or Aquinas, the product of a Stoic education was a virtuous and incorruptible statesman like Cicero, Seneca or the ideal leader who was the hoped-for product of humanist neoclassical education.

Among Petrarch's numerous complaints about Aristotelian scholasticism, the one which most powerfully shaped reading and education was the distinction he drew between how the cold logic of Aristotle's *Ethics* enabled one to know and understand virtue (*scire, intelligere*), but not to love and will it (*amare, velle*) (Petrarch 2003: 315). In the case of moral philosophy, he writes, "we study this branch of philosophy not in order to know, but to become good" (*ibid.*), a goal which he thinks Aristotelian scholastic education fails to achieve. Petrarch finds effective moral philosophy in strong rhetoric, exhortations that make the reader passionately *want* to become a better person instead of being tediously persuaded that virtue is good. He finds such "words that sting and bite" in Latin authors above all, Cicero foremost, Seneca second, and Horace a qualified third. And while Cicero might be the most powerful wielder of Latin prose, Seneca is, in Petrarch's estimation, foremost on the Virtues, as pseudo-Plutarch confirms (*Fam.* XXIV.5).

Petrarch's recommendation enhanced the popularity which Seneca's approachable moral treatises already enjoyed, as testified by the numerous manuscripts already circulating. Only Cicero and Virgil rivaled Seneca in primacy on early humanist reading lists, and so unique was his status as a moral philosopher by the end of the 1300s that the University of Piacenza had a professor of philosophy and a separate Professor of Seneca (Seneca 1910: ci). And in the first decades of Seneca's publication, more often than not, volumes for sale were actually the spurious Pauline letters, *De moribus* or *De quattuor virtutibus cardinalibus*, even better than any real Seneca to satisfy readers who wanted advice on morals and virtues from the quasi-Christian prince of moral philosophers. Well may we understand why Petrarch in his *De remediis utriusque fortunae* – possibly the most Stoic work produced in the entire Renaissance – devoted an entire dialogue to the burden of having too many books, lamenting that one who owns countless books owns countless errors which a lifetime's industry can never sort from truth (Petrarch 1967: 35). And Petrarch's *De remediis* was in turn based on the spurious *De remediis fortuitorum*, a genuinely classical work whose attribution to Seneca went unquestioned in an era when the Roman Stoic was as much a genre as a person: the genre of virtue-cultivating moral philosophy.

This early humanist obsession with moral philosophy also explains the comparatively secondary influence exerted in the Renaissance by a final body of sources we consider invaluable today. Greek commentators on Aristotle, writing in the second through sixth centuries also treated Stoic ideas, opposing some and appropriating others in the rich milieu of cross-pollination that also produced Plotinus and Porphyry. Alexander of Aphrodisias and Simplicius, as well as Themistius, Ammonius and John Philoponus preserve debates over free will, monism and creation, and even precious fragments of Zeno of Citium and other early Stoics. Comparably valuable are Galen, Plutarch, snippets in Platonic commentators such as Calcidius and Olympiodorus, and key church fathers. Several of the major Aristotelian commentators had been translated into Latin in the twelfth century, while others survived in Greek or Arabic,

and were used by Renaissance figures including Ficino, the two Picos, Poliziano and many others. Print editions and commentaries on these commentators began to see press before 1500. Yet, despite the details these authors provide, and despite the impact they had on knowledge of Aristotle and of Neoplatonism, in the fourteenth through early sixteenth centuries their impact on Renaissance impressions of Stoicism was real but comparatively limited. Justus Lipsius would tap these resources deeply as the seventeenth century approached, but before that, while humanist interest in Stoicism was dominated by the promise that its moral philosophy would produce a crop of Christian Ciceros, sources primarily useful for reconstructing its metaphysics and technical elements were of secondary interest. Meanwhile, in contrast, Dio Chrysostom occupied a more central place in Renaissance impressions of Stoicism than he does today, because his writings treat moral philosophy and politics, and because his life fit Renaissance ideals of Stoic virtue. Here was a golden-mouthed orator, who opposed the tyranny of Domitian, charmed great men armed with nothing but his eloquence and Plato and Demosthenes in his pocket, and ultimately advised and shaped the good emperors Nerva and Trajan. His discourses on distrust, tyranny, monarchy and glory were precisely what humanists wanted from a Stoic, and his life and career made him one, irrespective of his metaphysical beliefs.

### **Chronology of textual multiplication**

When we seek “the” date at which a given Greek text returned, we are actually seeking several dates: the first reference to the author in a Renaissance text, the first Latin translation, the first printed edition, vernacular translations, all mark stages in a cumulative process of textual multiplication.

Latin translations were central. Reading knowledge of Greek returned gradually to Western Europe, facilitated first by the desperate desire of Petrarch and his peers to access Homer and other masters held hostage by the language barrier. Greek learning accelerated from 1397 on thanks to Manuel Chrysoloras and other Eastern scholars who taught Greek in Italy, and even more thanks to the influx of Greek émigrés after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 (see Ciccolella 2008; Geanakoplos 1962). Yet, even after Greek instruction spread, competent Greek readers were a tiny sliver of the Latin-reading scholarly world. Latin manuscripts were also considerably less expensive, since duplicating Greek required a copyist at least vaguely competent in Greek, or the number of errors introduced in transcription reduced the text to gibberish. Throughout the fifteenth century, the library-building mania of humanists and their patrons led to the exponential multiplication of manuscripts, especially of Latin texts, so works which had existed in only two or four copies in the Middle Ages now circulated in dozens.

Printing did not represent the first moment of scholarly access to a work, but exponentially easier access. Manuscripts were rare, and as expensive as a house or a year’s wages (Cipolla 1994: 148). A text circulating in manuscript might be accessed by the expensive and dangerous endeavor of traveling to a major library (risking bandits on the roads and plague endemic in ports and metropolises), by paying a trained scribe to spend months reproducing it (not to mention the princely expense of vellum or paper), or by borrowing it from an extremely generous friend or patron. The dedicated managed this, purse and health permitting, but a far greater number managed it when printed books could be acquired from printers and itinerant booksellers for a tenth or a hundredth of the price. A good print shop could produce as many as 1,500 copies of a work for the cost of one or two manuscripts (Neddermeyer 1998), yet manuscripts, especially of popular Latin translations, continued to be produced for nearly

a century after 1450, as the new craft of printing diffused slowly thanks to the human limitations of personal training through the apprenticeship system, and as collectors' tastes resisted the transition from familiar manuscripts to crisp, inhuman print, which felt alien to many, much as ebooks do today (Reeve 1983).

The following chronology of the multiplication of Stoic sources demonstrates above all that the texts printed earliest and most often were not necessarily those we now consider seminal.<sup>2</sup> The *editio princeps* of an author, especially a Greek, might appear decades after the same work had circulated in excerpts and Latin translations. Particularly in the manuscript-dominated period, which can comfortably be extended to 1510 or later, the texts at the center of scholarly interest are slim selections, like the first four discourses of Dio Chrysostom, grouped under the Renaissance title *De regno*, which circulated in multiple competing Latin translations. Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, far more popular now than Epictetus or Dio Chrysostom, are last to arrive and hardly visible on our timeline, especially compared to the ubiquitous forgery of Antonio de Guevara. Cicero, of course, surpasses all, with popular philosophical works like *De amicitia* and *De senectute* printed more than sixty times in the incunabular period alone. This chronological view makes it possible to watch the diffusion of *spuria* in advance of canonical texts, and gradual return of authors. The names and locations of publishers are of particular interest, since they chronicle the physical diffusion of printing, moving down from Mainz, where Gutenberg began, to Italy via émigré entrepreneurs like Ulrich Han and Wendelin von Speyer. They, in turn, trained Italian printers, who made Italy the first center of Latin classics production, followed by Paris, while vernaculars spread internationally. The Reformation too is visible in the map of publication sites, as the more controversial texts and commentators retreat to Geneva or other arenas away from Counter Reformation censors. Vernaculars are the last stage of a text's diffusion, penetrating beyond the Latin-reading elite to a vastly larger literate world. These too map out printing history with their chronology. The first vernacular Cicero, for example was German, since, in 1488, the best infrastructure for distributing and selling books was still in the German-speaking lands where print was born, but by the early sixteenth century Italian is usually the first vernacular to appear, and by 1570, when the long-delayed *Meditations* finally had their first vernacular, the great markets were Paris and the schools at Lyon. Translations via intermediate translations, such as from Greek to French to English, chart the greater degree of overlap between certain language groups, and the persistent scarcity of Scholars skilled in Greek. At every stage, as print spread, it left us a visible map of the diffusion of reading and ideas.

For reasons of concision, this chronology gives full information for Dio Chrysostom, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, but lists only the earliest and most important editions of Cicero and Seneca,<sup>3</sup> and treats only Cicero's philosophical works. For each author, the most important editions and translations are indicated by small capitals.

1300s: Italian vernacular translations of Cicero circulate in manuscript.

1405: Cicero, French translation of *De senectute* by Laurent de Premierfait circulates in manuscript, not printed in the Renaissance.

1416: Cicero, French translation of *De amicitia* by Laurent de Premierfait, not printed in the Renaissance.

1428: DIO CHRYSOSTOM, Discourse 11 translated into Latin by Francesco Filelfo under the title *Oratio ad Ilienses*.

1433: DIOGENES LAERTIUS, Latin translation by Amborgio Traversari, widely influential.

1447/1455: DIO CHRYSOSTOM, Discourses 1–4 translated into Latin by Gregorio Tifernate.

- 1450: EPICTETUS, *Enchiridion* and preface to Simplicius's commentary translated into Latin by Niccolò Perroti.
- 1465: CICERO, *editio princeps* of *De officiis* and *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (Mainz: Johann Fust and Peter Schoeffer), first dated printing of any classical work.
- 1467: CICERO, *editio princeps* of *De senectute* and *De amicitia* (Cologne: Ulrich Zell).
- 1469: CICERO, *editio princeps* of *Tusculanae disputationes* (Rome: Ulrich Han).
- 1470: CICERO, *editio princeps* of the *Somnium Scipionis*, with *De officiis*, *De amicitia*, *De senectute*, and *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (Venice: Wendelin von Speyer).
- 1470: DIOGENES LAERTIUS (related), PSEUDO-BURLEY, first printing of the Latin compendium *Liber de vita et moribus philosophorum* (Cologne: Ulrich Zell). Once attributed to Walter Burley, it is based on the twelfth-century translation of Diogenes Laertius by Henricus Aristippus; it survives in nearly 300 manuscripts and was printed eighteen times by 1530.
- 1470/1: PSEUDO-SENECA, *editio princeps* of St Martin of Braga's *De quattuor virtutibus cardinalibus*, *De moribus*, *De remediis fortuitorum* and *Proverbia* (Cologne: Printer of the Historia S. Albani), reprinted constantly.<sup>4</sup>
- 1471: DIO CHRYSOSTOM, Discourses 1–4 (*De regno*) edited by Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini (i.e. Pope Pius III); it is disputed whether the translation is Piccolomini's or Tifer-nate's (Venice: Christophorus Valdarfer), reprinted 1493 (Bologna: Franciscus "Plato" de Benedictis).
- 1471/1484: Dio Chrysostom, Discourses 1–4 (*De regno*) a second translation into Latin by Andreas Brentius, narrow manuscript circulation.
- 1471: CICERO, collected philosophical works including *editio princeps* of *De natura deorum*, *De divinatione*, *De fato*, *Academica*, *De legibus* (Venice: Wendelin von Speyer).
- 1472: CICERO, *editio princeps* of *Topica* (Milan: Antonius Zarotus).
- 1472: DIOGENES LAERTIUS, first printing of Traversari's Latin translation (Rome: Georgius Lauer), reprinted twenty-two times by 1600, popular into the seventeenth century.
- 1475: SENECA, *editio princeps* of *Dialogi*, *De clementia*, *De beneficiis*, *Epistulae morales*, in an edition also including the spurious *De moribus*, *De quattuor virtutibus cardinalibus*, *De remediis fortuitorum*, *Proverbia* and Pauline letters (Naples: Matthias Moravus, for Blasio Romero).
- 1475: Pseudo-Seneca, Pauline letters printed with Jerome's *De viris illustribus* (Paris: Au Soufflet Vert, i.e. Louis Symonel et Socii).
- 1470s: Seneca, *Epistulae morales* and spurious Pauline letters (Strasbourg: The "R-Printer," Adolf Rusch).
- 1479: EPICTETUS, *Enchiridion* translated into Latin by Angelo Poliziano (printed 1497).
- 1480: Diogenes Laertius (related), Pseudo-Burley first Italian vernacular edition (Coloniae: s.n.), reprinted 1535.
- 1481: CICERO, first English translation of *De amicitia* by John Tiptoft along with *De senectute* probably by William Caxton translated from the French manuscript version of Laurent de Premierfait (Westminster: William Caxton).
- 1481: COMMENTATORS ON ARISTOTLE begin to be printed, starting with Ermolao Barbaro's freshly completed Latin translations of Themistius.
- 1488: Cicero, first German vernacular *De officiis*, anonymous translation (Augsburg: Johann Schobsser).
- 1490: Diogenes Laertius (related), Pseudo-Burley, first German vernacular edition, anonymous (Augsburg: Anton Sorg), reprinted 1519 (Augsburg: Grim & Wirsung).
- 1490: SENECA, *editio princeps* of *Naturales quaestiones*, accompanying other works of Seneca (Venice: Bernardinus de Choris and Simon de Luere).

- 1491: SENECA, first Spanish vernacular edition, containing *De vita beata*, *De studiis liberalibus* (i.e. Letter 88), *De providentia*, *De constantia sapientis* and pseudo-Seneca, *Proverbia*, translated by Alonso de Cartagena (Seville: Meinardo Ungut and Estanislao Polono).
- 1492: DIO CHRYSOSTOM: first printing of Discourse 11 (*Oratio ad Ilienses*) in Filelfo's 1428 Latin translation (Cremona: Bernardinus Misinta and Caesar Parmensis).
- 1493/4: Cicero, first French vernacular edition of *De officiis*, anonymous (location and publisher unknown), reprinted 1538 (Paris: Arnoul and L'Angelier).
- 1494: SENECA, Italian vernacular translation of *Epistulae morales* printed by Sebastiano Manilio (Venice: Sebastiano Manilio).
- Before 1494: DIO CHRYSOSTOM: Discourses 70–2 (*On Philosophy*, *On the Philosopher*, *On the Philosopher's Dress*) translated into Latin by Giorgio Merula (d. 1494).
- 1497: EPICTETUS, first printing of Angelo Poliziano's Latin *Enchiridion*, in a miscellany compiled by Filippo Beroaldo (Bologna: Benedictus Hectoris); forty reprints by 1750.
- 1497: DIOGENES LAERTIUS, lives of Aristotle and Theophrastus in Greek printed with *editio princeps* of Aristotle and Theophrastus (Venice: Aldus Manutius).
- 1498–99: CICERO, first *Opera Omnia* (Milan: Guillaume Le Signerre for Alexander Minutianus).
- c.1500: Seneca, Laurent de Premierfait's early fifteenth-century French translations printed (Paris: *s.n.*).
- 1510: PSEUDO-EPICTETUS: Second- or third-century Latin dialog *Altercatio Hadriani et Epicteti* published with the forged *Antiquitates* of Annius of Viterbo ([Paris]: [Marnef]).
- 1513: ALEXANDER APHRODESIENSIS, commentaries on Aristotle begin to be printed, in both Greek and Latin (mainly Venice: Aldus, also other presses).
- 1515: SENECA, new *Opera Omnia* edited by Erasmus excludes spurious *De quattuor virtutibus*, *Proverbia*, *De moribus* and *Epistolae Pauli et Senecae*, but still includes *De paupertate*, *De remediis* and works of Seneca the Elder (Basel: Johannes Froben).
- 1517: MARCUS AURELIUS, the *De arte cabbalistica* of Johannes Reuchlin contains the oldest traceable reference to Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*, which still exists only in Greek manuscript.
- 1522: Seneca, important commentary by Matthaeus Fortunatus on the *Naturales quaestiones* (Venice: Aldus Manutius and Andrea Asulanus).
- 1522: Cicero, first German vernacular edition of *De amicitia*, *De senectute* and *Tusculanae disputationes* (Augsburg: Sigism. Grimm).
- 1522: Cicero, first German vernacular edition of *De Officiis* (Augsburg: Sigism. Grimm).
- 1527: Diogenes Laertius (related), Pseudo-Burley printed in a Spanish translation from the fifteenth century by Hernando Díaz de Valdepeñas (Toledo: [Remon de Petras]), reprinted 1541 (Seville: Jacopo Cromberger).
- 1527: DIOGENES LAERTIUS, life of Xenophon published with the Greek Xenophon (Florence: Phillipus Junta).
- 1528: Cicero, Italian vernacular translation by Federico Vendramino of *De officiis*, *De amicitia*, *De senectute*, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (Venice: Bernardino di Vitale).
- 1528: EPICTETUS, *editio princeps* of the *Enchiridion* in Greek, with Simplicius's commentary (Venice: Joannes Antonius et Fratres de Sabio); Simplicius's commentary was reprinted at least nine times by 1600.
- 1528: PSEUDO-MARCUS AURELIUS, Antonio de Guevara's Spanish forgery *Libro áureo de Marco Aurelio* (Seville: Jacopo Cromberger; pirated edition produced in Valencia by Juan de Molina the same year), reprinted as early as 1529.
- 1529: Seneca, second *Opera* overseen by Erasmus, far more influential (Basel: Johannes Froben).

- 1531: DIO CHRYSOSTOM, Discourse 74 (*On Distrust*) printed in Latin translation by Joachim Camerarius (Nuremberg: Johannes Petreius).
- 1531: Epictetus, first German vernacular *Enchiridion*, Jacob Schenck (Basel: T. Wolff).
- 1531: Pseudo-Marcus Aurelius, French translation of the *Livre doré* of Antonio de Guevara, by René Berthaut de la Grise (Paris: Galliot du pre libraire iure de L'uniuersite de Paris).
- 1532: Seneca, commentary on *De dementia* by John Calvin (Paris: Ludouicus Cyaneus).
- 1533: DIOGENES LAERTIUS, *editio princeps* in Greek (Basel: Froben).
- 1534: Cicero, first English vernacular edition of *Paradoxa Stoicorum* and *De officiis*, translated by Robert Whittington (London: Wynkyn de Worde).
- 1535: Cicero, new English vernacular editions of *De senectute*, translated by Robert Whittington (London: John Byddell).
- 1535: EPICETUS, *editio princeps* of the *Discourses* in Greek (Venice: Bartolomaeo Zanetti).
- 1535: Pseudo-Marcus Aurelius, English translation of the *Golden Book* by Antonio de Guevara, translated John Bouchier Berners from French (London: Thomas Berthelet); repeatedly published in new English versions sometimes titled *The Dial of Princes*.
- 1536: Seneca, first German vernacular edition of moral works including *Epistulae morales* and spurious *De moribus*, by Michael Herr (Strasbourg: Balth. Beck).
- 1538: CICERO (related), Jacopo Sadoletto publishes *De laudibus philosophiae*, written as substitute for the lost *Hortensius* of Cicero (Lyon: Gryphius).
- 1538: Cicero, first German vernacular edition of *Somnium Scipione* and *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (Augsburg: Alexander Weissenhorn).
- 1538: CICERO, Pier Vettori collects fragments of the still-absent *De republica* for the new Cicero *Opera Omnia* (Paris: Robert Estienne).
- 1538: Cicero, Portuguese translation of *De amicitia*, the only Renaissance Portuguese Cicero (Venice: Stevano Sabio).
- 1539: Cicero, first French vernacular edition of *De amicitia*, *De senectute*, *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, *Somnium Scipione* and a new translation of *De officiis*, all translated by Denis Janot (Paris: Denis Janot).
- 1539: Cicero, first Italian vernacular edition of *Somnium Scipione*, translated by Antonio Brucioli (Venice: Giovanni da la Chiesa).
- 1543: Cicero, first French vernacular edition of *Tusculanae disputationes*, translated by Etienne Dolet (Lyon: Etienne Dolet), reprinted 1545 (Lyon: S. Sabon for A. Constantin).
- 1543: EPICETUS, *Enchiridion*, new Latin translation by Hieronymus Verlenius (Busciducis [s'-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands]: J. Schoeffer) reprinted in 1550 with expanded notes and translated Epictetan fragments from *Stobaeus* (Louvain: Bartholomei Grauij).
- 1544: CICERO, first Italian vernacular edition of *Tusculanae disputationes*, translated by Sebastiano Fausto da Longiano (Venice: Vincenzo Valgrisi).
- 1544: EPICETUS, first French vernacular *Enchiridion* by Antoine du Moulin (Lyon: Jean de Tournes).
- 1543: Pseudo-Marcus Aurelius, first Italian vernacular edition of the *Libro d'oro* of Antonio de Guevara by Mambrino Roseo (Venice: *s.n.*) reprinted the same year (Rome: B. de Cartolari Perugino), and frequently thereafter.
- 1545: DIO CHRYSOSTOM, first printing of Discourses 6 and 66 (*Against Tyranny*, *On Glory*) translated into Latin by Bartholomaeus Amantius (Leipzig: Valentin Bapst).
- 1545: Diogenes Laertius, first Italian vernacular edition by Bartolomeo, Lodovico and Pietro Rositini (Venice: Vincenzo Vaugris)
- 1546: Cicero, first edition of the frequently reprinted Castilian translations of *De officiis*, *De amicitia* and *De senectute* by Francisco Tamara of Cadiz (Antwerp: Juan Steelsio).



- 1549: Cicero, Castilian translations by Tamara reprinted with Castilian *Paradoxa Stoicorum* and *Somnium Scipione* translated by Juan Jarava (Antwerp: Juan Steelsio).
- 1550: CICERO, translation from French to English of *De amicitia*, by John Harington (London: Thomas Berthelette).
- 1551: DIO CHRYSOSTOM, Greek *editio princeps* including all eighty discourses (Venice: Federicus Turrisanus).
- 1553: Cicero, new Italian vernacular translation of *Somnium Scipione*, by Pompeo della Barba (Venice: G. M. Bonelli).
- 1554: EPICTETUS, *Discourses* translated into Latin for the first time by Jacob Schenck (Basel: I. Oporinum).
- 1554: Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, new Latin translation and first modern commentary by Thomas Naogeorgus (Kirchmeier) (Strasbourg: Wendel Richel).
- 1554: SENECA, Italian translation of *De beneficiis* by Benedetto Varchi (Florence: Lorenzo Torrentino).
- 1555: DIO CHRYSOSTOM, first printing of a Latin translation of all eighty discourses by Thomas Naogeorgus (Kirchmeier) (Basel: Ioannes Oporinus).
- 1556: Cicero, first Italian vernacular edition of *Topica*, translated by Simone della Barba (Venice: Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari).
- 1556: Cicero, first edition of a frequently reprinted new English translation of *De officiis* by Nicolas Grimald (London: R. Tottel).
- 1559: MARCUS AURELIUS, *editio princeps* Greek with Latin translation by Gulielmus Xylander (Wilhelm Holtzmann) first printed (Lyons: Ioan. Tornaesius).
- 1559: CICERO, first attempt at a complete collection of Ciceronian fragments, ed. Carlo Signonio (Venice: J. Zilletus).
- 1561: Seneca, first French *De beneficiis* (Paris: Benoît Prévost and Étienne Grouilleau).
- 1561: Cicero, first English *Tusculanae disputationes*, by John Dolman (London: Thomas Marshe).
- 1561: Cicero, first Dutch *De officiis*, translated by Dierick Coornhert (Haarlem: I. van Zuren).
- 1561: Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, new Latin translation by Hieronymus Wolf (Basel: Joannes Oporini), reprinted sixty-eight times by 1750.
- 1563: Epictetus, Simplicius's commentary on the *Enchiridion* translated into Latin for the first time by Hieronymus Wolf, printed along with Wolf's commentary and his new translation of Epictetus's *Discourses*, (Basel: Joannis Oporini).
- 1564: Cicero, corrected edition of Vendramino's Italian translations of *De officiis*, *De amicitia*, *De senectute* and *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, edited by Ludovico Dolce (Venice: Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari).
- 1564: Epictetus, first Dutch vernacular *Enchiridion*, by Marcus Antonius Gillis (Antwerp: Ian van Waesberge).
- 1564: Epictetus, first Italian vernacular *Enchiridion*, by Giulio Ballino (Venice: Gio. Andrea Valvassori).
- 1567: Epictetus, first English vernacular *Enchiridion*, by James Sanford (London: H. Bynneman for Leonard Maylard).
- 1569: Seneca, Italian translation of *De ira* by Francesco Serdonati (Padua: Lorenzo Pasquato).
- 1568: Marcus Aurelius, second edition in Greek with a Latin translation by Wilhelm Holtzmann, accompanied by paradoxographers Antoninus Liberalis, Phlegon Trallianus, Appolonius and Antigonus of Carystus (Basil: Guarinus).
- 1569: Cicero, new English translations of *De senectute* and *Paradoxa Stoicorum* by Thomas Newton (London: Thomas Marshe).

- 1569: Seneca, English translation of *De beneficiis* by Nicholas Haward (London: Thomas Marshe).
- 1570: Marcus Aurelius, first vernacular translation, into French, by Pardiux Duprat (Lyon: Gabriel Fotier).
- 1570: Diogenes Laertius, second Greek edition by Henri II Estienne ([Geneva]: Henricus Stephanus).
- 1572: Pseudo-Marcus Aurelius, German translation of the *Gülden Buch* of Antonio de Geuvara by Conrad Egenberger (Frankfurt: Niclas Basse).
- 1577: Cicero, first English translation of *Somnium Scipionis* and a new translation of *De amicitia* by Thomas Newton (London: Thomas Marshe).
- 1579: Cicero, new French vernacular translation by Blaise de Vigenère (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau).
- 1578: Seneca, second English translation of *De beneficiis* by Arthur Golding (London: John Kingston for John Day).
- 1580: Dio Chrysostom, New Latin translation of Discourse 51 (*Against Monarchy*) by Caelius Secundus Curio, published with the 1580 edition of Machiavelli's *Prince*, as a counter-argument (Basel: [Ex officina Petri Perrae]).
- 1582: Seneca, French translation of *Epistulae morales* (Paris: Guillaume Chaudiere).
- 1583: Diogenes Laertius, notes on the *Lives* by Isaac (Hortibonus) Casaubon (Morges: Ioannis le Preux).
- 1583: PSEUDO-CICERO, forged *Consolatio* on the death of Tullia by Carlo Sigonio (Bologna: Joannes Rossius), widely reprinted.
- 1585: Seneca, influential annotations by Marc-Antoine Muret (Rome: Bartolomeo Grassi).
- 1585: Epictetus, commentary on the *Enchiridion* by Christian Francken (based on the 1554 Naogeorgus) accompanying his new translation (Cluj).
- 1590: Seneca, French complete philosophical works translated by Simon Goulart (Paris: Jean Houzé).
- 1592: Seneca, influential edition of the notes of Muret and Janus Gruterus (Heidelberg: Hieronymus Comellinus).
- 1593: Diogenes Laertius, Greek edition of Henri II Estienne (of 1570) reprinted with notes of Isaac Casaubon: became the standard text ([Geneva]: Henricus Stephanus).
- 1594: Epictetus, first Portuguese *Enchiridion* translated by Francisco Anton de Sousa (Coimbra: António de Mariz).
- 1594: Diogenes Laertius, publication by Cardinal Aldobrandini of his uncle Thomas Aldobrandini's translation and notes on books 1–9 from the 1560s (Rome: Luigi Zanetti).
- 1598: Diogenes Laertius, Italian paraphrase by Giosefo Salviati (Venice: [Gioachino Brugnolo]).
- 1600: Epictetus, first translation of *Enchiridion* into Spanish by Francisco Sánchez de las Brozas (the rhetorician), printed ([Salamanca]).
- 1602: Diogenes Laertius, French translation by François Fougerolles (Lyon: I. A. Huguetan).
- 1605: Seneca, important annotated edition by Justus Lipsius (Antwerp: Plantin).
- 1609: Epictetus, first French *Discourses*, translated by Jean Goulu (Paris: Jean de Heuqueville).
- 1634: Marcus Aurelius, first English translation by Meric Casaubon, who named it *Meditations* (London: M. Flesher for Richard Mynne).

## Notes

- 1 Anniius of Viterbo (Giovanni Nenni) was a Dominican scholar-charlatan, whose most infamous deception was his 1498 *Antiquitates* (originally *Commentaria super opera diversorum auctorum de antiquitatibus loquentium*), which presented several forged “newly discovered” texts by pre-Christian Greek and Latin

authors, accompanied by his commentary, engineered to support his scheme for a revised chronology of European history (Ligota 1987).

- 2 The information in this chronology comes substantially from Hankins and Palmer 2008: 37–47, 62–3.
- 3 See Hankins and Palmer 2008: 45–7 for Cicero; Fohlen 2002 for Seneca.
- 4 A supposed 1463 edition of these pseudo-Seneca works is a forgery; see Gaskell 1964. Thanks to Martin Davies for confirming this.

## Further reading

For details on the recovery and publication of classics in the Renaissance, see the overview *Commerce with the Classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers* by Antony Grafton (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), and the reference resource *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1983) by Leighton D. Reynolds, which traces the medieval manuscript transmission and reception of all key classical texts. More detail on the transmission, translation, publication and reception of classical works is collected in the ongoing reference work *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1960–), while a concise digest treating philosophical works is provided by James Hankins and Ada Palmer, *The Recovery of Ancient Philosophy in the Renaissance: A Brief Guide* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2008). On Stoic receptions leading to the Renaissance see Gérard Verbeke, *The Presence of Stoicism in Medieval Thought* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1983). On the textual history of Epictetus see the two pieces by W. A. Oldfather, *Contributions toward a Bibliography of Epictetus* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1927) and its *Supplement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952), and on its translation history see Niccolò Perotti's *Version of the Enchiridion of Epictetus* by Revilo Pendleton Oliver (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1954). On Seneca see Leighton D. Reynolds, *The Medieval Tradition of Seneca's Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965) and Leitizia A. Panizza, "Gasparino Barzizza's Commentaries on Seneca's Letters," *Traditio* 33 (1977): 297–358. On Cicero see Emanuele Narducci, *Cicerone e i suoi interpreti* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2004).

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## 9

# STOICISM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

*Jill Kraye*

Stoicism, like the other major Hellenistic sects, Epicureanism and Skepticism (both Academic and Pyrrhonian), played only a marginal role in the philosophy of the Italian Renaissance (Kraye 2007). Stoicism neither challenged the long-standing dominance of Aristotelianism in the universities, nor made the kind of inroads into the wider philosophical culture of the period which Platonism was able to achieve. Despite remaining on the sidelines from the perspective of most Renaissance philosophers, Stoicism attracted attention from humanists eager to learn about the history of ancient philosophy. Humanists also helped Stoic doctrines to become better known through their Latin translations of previously unavailable Greek works: Diogenes Laertius's "Life of Zeno" and Epictetus's *Handbook*, along with the preface to Simplicius's commentary on it. This influx of new information did not displace the writings of Cicero and Seneca, however, which continued to be the main sources consulted and cited, as they had been in the Middle Ages, by those seeking to understand or explain the tenets of Stoic philosophy. Nor was there an appreciable shift in the almost exclusive focus on the sect's ethical doctrines until the late fifteenth century, when their views on epistemology, psychology and natural philosophy began to be explored, and the early decades of the sixteenth century, when the translation of *On Fate* by the ancient Greek Aristotelian commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias generated some interest in Stoic determinism.

### **The early fifteenth century**

We can gain a good insight into the attitude toward Stoic philosophy in the early decades of the fifteenth century from the works of one of the leading intellectuals of the period, Leonardo Bruni (c.1370–1444). Best known as an influential humanist and respected Chancellor of Florence, Bruni made important contributions to Renaissance philosophy through his widely read translations of Plato and Aristotle into elegant classical Latin and through his own works on philosophical subjects, in particular *An Isagogue of Moral Philosophy*. This short dialogue, written between 1424 and 1426, is largely based on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Cicero's *On the Ends of Good and Evil*, and is intended to serve as an introduction to the ethical doctrines of the major sects of ancient philosophy: Aristotelians (known as Peripatetics), Epicureans and Stoics. While Bruni, whose own philosophical allegiances lay with Aristotle,

stresses the fundamental agreement between the three sects, he also points out those positions which distinguish each one from the others.

Casting himself as one of the characters in the dialogue, Bruni says that Peripatetics considered the goods of the soul, above all, virtue, to be the foundation of happiness, but nevertheless believed that goods of the body, such as health, and external goods, such as possessions, were both necessary for the happy life. The Stoics, by contrast, maintained that virtue on its own was sufficient for happiness, which “neither imprisonment, nor torture, nor any pain whatever, nor poverty, nor exile” could impede; and just as “nothing is good except that which is done nobly and virtuously, so also nothing is evil except that which is done in a base or vicious manner.” He goes on to reconcile the Peripatetic and Stoic positions on bodily and external goods by claiming that their disagreement is merely a matter of terminology: what the Peripatetics, who prefer words in common use, call “goods” and “evils” are referred to by the Stoics, who enjoy coining new words, as “things advantageous” (*praeposita*) and “things to be avoided” (*reiecta*) (Bruni 1987a: 271–3).

Yet, in a letter written, like the *Isagogue*, in the 1420s, to the jurist and magistrate Tommaso Cambiatore, who had defended the Stoic stance on happiness, Bruni has no hesitation about endorsing the Peripatetic view: “just as the soul, which is far superior to the body, nonetheless needs the body in order to become a human being, so I admit that the goods of the soul, too, are far superior, but bodily and external goods are nonetheless needed to be happy” (Bruni 1741: 12–13). In a letter of consolation from 1433/4, addressed to a member of the Medici family whose mother had recently died, Bruni, although ranking “good health and long life” well below virtue among the excellences of women, takes issue with “Zeno and the Stoics” who “make little of such gifts” and insists instead that “the higher excellences are tarnished by shattered health and suffering, and no estimable perfection can be discovered in a short life” (Bruni 1987b: 337–8). Similarly, Bruni’s contemporary and fellow humanist, Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), has a character in his dialogue *On Nobility* espouse the Stoic doctrine that “virtue needs no help from riches or fortune ... since it has in itself sufficient means to live well and happily.”<sup>1</sup> In his correspondence, however, Poggio takes the more moderate line that “if riches, wealth, honors ... are offered honestly, I think they should by no means be rejected.”<sup>2</sup> Stoicism’s conception of self-sufficient virtue, it seems, was considered to be worthy of admiration – “it is certainly a stout and manly creed,” says Bruni (Bruni 1987a: 271) – but was not regarded as a feasible or sensible way to live one’s life.

In the 1430s, a new Greek source on Stoicism was translated into Latin and therefore became available to the educated reading public of the Renaissance – knowledge of Greek was still a rare accomplishment in the fifteenth century. This was Diogenes Laertius’s *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Book 7 of which contains biographies of Zeno and his successors, as well as setting out their philosophical doctrines and citing snippets from their writings. The Latin version, completed in 1433 by the Camaldulensian monk Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439), circulated widely, initially in manuscript and from around 1472 in print. It took a long time, however, for the work to have a significant impact on established perceptions of Stoic philosophy. As we shall see, some material from Book 7 was taken up in the later fifteenth century, but usually as a supplement to the standard accounts in Cicero and Seneca. It was, no doubt, extremely difficult to assimilate Diogenes’s uncritical and unsystematic treatment of the earliest Greek Stoic philosophers, especially since their works survived only in fragments. Not until the first years of the seventeenth century, when this data began to be analyzed and classified, together with other surviving evidence from antiquity, did it become possible to exploit it fully (Kraye 2008).

### **The mid-fifteenth century**

Another new Greek source on Stoicism became available in Latin in the middle of the fifteenth century. Niccolò Perotti (1429–1480), the humanist secretary to the Byzantine émigré scholar and philosopher Cardinal Bessarion (c.1403/8–1472), translated the *Handbook* (the Greek title, *Enchiridion*, refers to something held in the hand) of Epictetus in 1450 and dedicated it to Pope Nicholas V (r. 1447–55), in an apparent bid to secure a well-remunerated role for himself in the papal project to make the heritage of ancient Greek culture more accessible to the Latin West. He probably selected the *Handbook* as a presentation piece, not because either he or the pope was especially interested in Stoicism, but because it was a short work with a strong moral dimension, similar to the essays *On Envy* by St Basil and Plutarch which he had translated the previous year, and because his patron Bessarion possessed a manuscript of the work (now, like bulk of the cardinal's collection, in the Marciana Library in Venice) which he had put at Perotti's disposal (Perotti 1954: 1–39; P. Hadot 1987: 327–9; Boter 2011: 27–9).

The codex owned by Bessarion, one of the fifteenth century's staunchest defenders of Plato (Bessarion 1997), also contained a commentary on the *Handbook* by the sixth-century Neoplatonist Simplicius. Although Perotti included the preface to this commentary in his translation of the *Handbook* (Perotti 1954: 70–80), he does not seem to have been influenced by Simplicius's explicitly Platonic interpretation of Epictetus's philosophy. In dedicating his translation to the pope, he draws instead on Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, citing, moreover, passages which praise philosophy in general rather than any identifiably Stoic teachings. Indeed, Perotti presents Epictetus more as a wise moral philosopher, whose teachings will help us to become just and temperate, than as an exponent of the demanding and uncompromising ethics promoted by the Stoics. The main theme of his dedication is that we can learn from Epictetus to place the health of our souls above that of our bodies, so that we devote more care to curing our spiritual ills than to healing our physical diseases (ibid.: 65–9). Epictetus's message, however, is far more severe: the body is not merely of less importance than the soul but of no importance whatever to us, since it belongs – like wealth, possessions, reputation and honors – to those things which are not “under our control” and “not our own doing” (*Ench.* 1). Perotti's watered-down introduction to the treatise would have given readers little idea of the distinctive aspects of Stoic moral philosophy.

Perotti's translation did not sink without a trace – around nineteen manuscripts survive, most of them from the fifteenth century (Boter 2011: 28–9) – but the fact that it did not get into print until our own times indicates that it failed to ignite the interest of Renaissance readers, perhaps because his overly literal rendition of Epictetus's deliberately plain and simple Greek did not conform to the rhetorical and Ciceronian Latin fashionable at the time (Perotti 1954: 27).

### **The late fifteenth century**

The limited circulation of Perotti's translation explains why Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494), when he produced another Latin version of the *Handbook* in 1479, was apparently unaware of his predecessor's work. There are, however, similarities between the circumstances of the two translations. Like Perotti, Poliziano, who would become the most eminent Italian humanist of his day, dedicated his version to a powerful patron: Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–1492), the unofficial ruler of Florence, who four years earlier had taken the promising young classical scholar under his wing and appointed him as tutor to his toddler sons. Also like

Perotti, Poliziano probably selected the *Handbook* partly for its brevity – in the same period he translated two other relatively short works: the *Problems* attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias and Plutarch’s *Love Stories* (Mercier 2006: 4) – and partly because he had access, in this case, to two Greek manuscripts of the treatise, courtesy of Lorenzo, who had made the resources of the Medici library available to him. And finally, like Perotti, Poliziano made use of Simplicius’s commentary in his translation (Simplicius 2002: 37–40; Oliver 1958; Boter 2011: 29–34).

Despite these parallels, the quality of Poliziano’s translation, both philologically and philosophically, is in a different league from Perotti’s, and this is reflected in its extensive dissemination in print (Boter 2011: 32–4). Not only is Poliziano’s understanding of Epictetus’s Greek more accurate and his Latin style more classically correct, but, as he informed Lorenzo in the dedicatory preface, he employed the passages from the *Handbook* cited by Simplicius in his commentary to fill in lacunae and emend errors in the two very corrupt Greek manuscripts from which he was working (Poliziano 1553: 393).<sup>3</sup> While Perotti had translated Simplicius’s preface but not taken advantage of the material it provided, Poliziano deployed the information about Epictetus’s life and Arrian’s editing of the *Handbook* which he had gleaned from the preface to introduce the work to Lorenzo (P. Hadot 1987: 357–8). Knowing Lorenzo’s predilection for Platonic philosophy (Kristeller 1956a; Hankins 1990: II 451–2),<sup>4</sup> Poliziano also repeated Simplicius’s statement that Epictetus had learned from Plato’s *First Alcibiades* 129c–130c that to be truly a human being one must exist entirely in one’s rational soul and that anything beyond the rational soul was therefore of no concern to such a person (Simplicius 2002: 39–40; Poliziano 1553: 393).<sup>5</sup> Poliziano’s encyclopedic knowledge of ancient literature enabled him to shed further light on the treatise by quoting the statement, found in Aulus Gellius’s miscellany, *Attic Nights* (17.19.6), that Epictetus had expressed everything contained in the *Handbook* in just two words: “bear and forbear” (*sustine et abstine*). This Stoic catchphrase later gained popularity when it was included by Erasmus in his *Adages* and then adopted as the motto for one of Andrea Alciato’s *Emblems* (Kraye 2008: 10–12).

Poliziano concluded his preface by stating that the *Handbook* was especially suited to Lorenzo’s character and to the troubled times in which they were living (Poliziano 1553: 394).<sup>6</sup> We do not know what the dedicatee thought of the work or even whether he bothered to read it. We do, however, have the reactions of two readers, both from Poliziano’s circle, who responded in very different ways to Epictetus’s Stoic philosophy. The first of these is Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), to whom Poliziano sent a copy of the translation, in return for some love poems on which Pico had asked his older and more established friend to pass judgement. In his reply, Pico imagines that Epictetus himself had come to visit him and his associates. We received him, he tells Poliziano, “with the respect we owed him,” and then he began “to discourse on moral philosophy, and he did so in Latin,” not stopping “until he had turned us from Peripatetics into Stoics and all of us had endorsed the principle of freedom from emotion.” Pico’s group, who “a little while ago were addicted to pleasure” are “now second to none in their ability to endure anything.” “We experience no grief or pain,” he continues, “we make no demands; we are incapable of servitude or defeat,” and “rather than challenge others’ opinions of us (and other things that are likewise beyond our control), we ignore them.” Rephrasing the two-word summary of the *Handbook* which Poliziano had taken from Aulus Gellius, Pico says: “to give you all of Epictetus in a nutshell, we have learned beyond measure how to endure adversity and abstain from pleasure.” He concludes the letter by assuring his friend that, having previously been a devotee of either Aristotle or Plato, Epictetus has persuaded him to become a Stoic (Poliziano 2006: 21–3).



Praise of one humanist by another should always be taken with a pinch of salt. Pico's conversion to Stoicism was probably little more than a conceit to flatter the eloquence of his friend's Latin translation. For the rest of his brief life, Pico remained committed to reconciling Aristotelianism and Platonism (Valcke 2005);<sup>7</sup> and, in 1492, when he wrote the first part of his grand concord of the two philosophies, he dedicated it to Poliziano (Pico della Mirandola 1942: 386–9), who at the time was lecturing on Aristotle at the Florentine university and whose interest in Stoicism, occasioned by the specific circumstances surrounding his translation of the *Handbook*, had long since faded into the background.<sup>8</sup>

Poliziano's engagement with Stoic philosophy may have been short-lived, but it was deep enough for him to mount a robust defense of Epictetus against the criticisms of a second contemporary reader, Bartolomeo Scala (1430–1497), a humanist Chancellor of Florence, like Bruni, and a protégé of Lorenzo de' Medici, like Poliziano (Brown 1979). It is possible that competition between Poliziano and Scala for Lorenzo's favor played some part in their dispute, though they did have genuine substantive disagreements about Epictetus. Yet while Scala attacked his doctrines and Poliziano defended them, they both understood more clearly than Perotti that his Stoic moral philosophy was at variance in important respects with the mainstream of ancient ethics.

The objections which Scala raised to the *Handbook* are known only through a letter which Poliziano wrote to him in August 1479, a few months after the completion of his translation, and in which he attempted to counter them point by point. According to Poliziano, Scala had complained that Epictetus's precepts were "obscure" because he did not explain "what our responsibilities are," that they were "beyond human powers" because "nature commands us to express our grief," and that they were "false" because he did not treat "the body as part of us" although "we are composed of a body and a soul" (Poliziano 1997: 193). Before examining Poliziano's reply to these three charges, it will be helpful to look at Scala's treatment of Stoic doctrines and issues in his earlier writings in order to understand the basis of his allegations.

Scala's *Letter on the Philosophical Sects*, written in 1458, is an attempt to provide "some sort of account of the more famous philosophical schools and their differences." He refers to Bruni's *Isagogue*, in which he "reconciled the philosophers, especially those whose views are considered the most important," as a precursor to his own enterprise; but, unlike Bruni, who dealt solely with moral philosophy, Scala examines not only doctrines concerning "life and morality," but also "the secrets of nature, and the reasoning used in philosophical argument" (Scala 2008: 3). In line with this tripartite division of philosophy, Scala's discussion of the Stoics, which he bases mainly on Cicero (*Academics* and *On the Ends*) while also taking some information from Diogenes Laertius, includes Zeno's epistemology: he "said that true judgment must rely on the senses," and his "philosophy of nature": he "thought that all things arise from fire, and that it was God. And ... nothing exists except what appears to the senses" (ibid.: 27).<sup>9</sup> He dwells at somewhat greater length on Zeno's ethics: "he placed the highest good in virtue alone, and said there is no good besides virtue," though some things are either to be preferred (*praeposita*) or rejected (*reiecta*); as for "disturbances of the mind – which the Greeks called *ta pathê* and Cicero called 'perturbations' (*perturbationes*), and some other people call 'passions,'" he held that they were "caused by uncontrolled desire" and that therefore "the wise man keeps himself well apart from these" (ibid.). The letter concludes with a warning that "we must turn away" from certain pagan philosophical doctrines which "reject Christian truth." Among these is the Platonist belief that God created our souls but not our bodies: "For it is written, 'He made man after his image and likeness' (Genesis 1:26); and man cannot have been made by God without a body, since man consists of both body and soul" (ibid.: 29–31).

In his *Dialogue of Consolation*, of 1463, Scala has the main interlocutor, Lorenzo's grandfather Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464), take the Stoics, rather than the Platonists, to task for not recognizing that man is composed of a body as well as a soul: “they pay so much tribute to virtue, ... they entirely forget the body.”<sup>10</sup> Although the body “is meant to serve at the command of the mind, the mind is not able to achieve control when the body is racked with pain, when it burns, when it is cut.” Cosimo asks, “Who does not see that this demand for control is contrary to nature ... ?” after coming to the conclusion that “[w]e ought to think differently, quite differently from the Stoics,” for “fine as their discourse is, however magnificent its ornate eloquence, they seem to have ... left nature behind” (ibid.: 95). Two of Scala's three criticisms of Epictetus – that he did not regard “the body as part of us” and that his precepts were “beyond human powers” because they defied nature's commands – were thus based on views about Stoic moral philosophy which he had formed long before he read Poliziano's translation of the *Handbook*.

In his reply to Scala, Poliziano adopted one of the stratagems he had used to win over Lorenzo in his dedicatory preface: playing the Platonic card handed to him by Simplicius, he maintained that Epictetus's philosophy was inspired by *First Alcibiades* 129c–130c, where, he says, Socrates “proves that man ... consists of nothing more than a rational soul, for he says that a man uses his hands to act in the same way that a shoemaker uses his awl” and therefore “the person who uses his body as an instrument is the one who truly deserves to be called a man” (Poliziano 1997: 193). Poliziano's claim that Epictetus had “the majesty of Plato and the entire Platonic school” behind him (ibid.: 197) was a clever tactic: like many Florentine intellectuals at the time, Scala, despite his misgivings about the Platonists' account of the creation of the soul, was full of admiration for “the utterly divine teachings of Plato's philosophy” (Scala 2008: 19). Putting Plato in Scala's way just as Homer placed Ajax in the way of Hector when he was attacking the Greek camp (*Iliad* 14.402–41), he insists that “the body has the role of a tool in relation to the soul,” that man “therefore consists of a soul” and that “the body is no part of us” (Poliziano 1997: 193–4).

Having put paid to Scala's third objection, Poliziano moves on to the first one – that Epictetus “did not explain what our responsibilities are” – for which he draws once again on Simplicius's Platonic interpretation of the *Handbook*. According to Simplicius, the treatise was not aimed at those who have attained the purified virtues and therefore “flee from the body and from the bodily emotions,” and even less at those who have reached the higher level of the contemplative virtues, which enables them to rise above their “rational life” and seek “to be one of our superiors.” Instead, Epictetus's target readership were those whose essence is “in accordance with a rational life, which uses the body as an instrument” (Simplicius 2002: 38; I. Hadot 2014: 152–5). Although Poliziano employs a modified scheme of the Platonic virtues, borrowed from Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 1.8, he follows Simplicius in presenting Epictetus's intended reader as “someone who has persuaded himself that man truly consists of a rational soul” and has “resolved that the soul should use the body as its instrument” (Poliziano 1997: 194; P. Hadot 1987: 330–3; Kraye 2001: 168–9; Mercier 2006: 14–15). Furthermore, relying on the distinction which Simplicius makes in his comment on *Handbook* chapter 10 between, on the one hand, “temperance,” which belongs to “those who are completely educated” and in whom “the emotional part of the soul ... is completely subjected to reason, and never disputes with it,” and, on the other, “self control,” which belongs to “those who are still being educated” and in whom “the emotions are still aroused and in dispute with reason” (Simplicius 2002: 92), Poliziano says that Epictetus undertook to teach the person who is continent, or self-controlled, not the one who is temperate. “Once you understand that Epictetus's teaching was aimed at such a man,” he tells Scala, “you will

no longer be in the dark as to what man's responsibilities are," for he considers "the things which are our responsibility as those which derive from what is part of us," that is, our rational soul; and "no one would deny that all emotions are related to the soul." So, "whatever the emotions do wrongly – whatever indeed they do – is our responsibility" (Poliziano 1997: 194–5).

At this point, Poliziano, instead of expounding the Stoic doctrine of *apatheia*, freedom from emotion, attributes to Epictetus the Aristotelian doctrine of *metriopatheia*, moderation of emotion, arguing that just as in "a well-adjusted body good health is produced by the disposition we call equilibrium" and is "destroyed when the balance is tipped in the direction of either excess or deficiency," so when the emotions "are unrestrained and violent, they make a man miserable" and "when moderate and orderly, they make him happy" (ibid.: 195). Here, too, we can detect the influence of Simplicius, who, in line with other Neoplatonic Greek commentators on Aristotle, endorsed Plotinus's reconciliation of *apatheia* and *metriopatheia* as successively attained levels of virtue (Simplicius 2002: 15; Sorabji 2004: 280–1). Poliziano, however, adds a Platonic reference of his own: "The soul, Plato wrote with divine inspiration, is like a charioteer or a horseman (*Phaedrus* 246a–b):<sup>11</sup> if it spares the whip and makes more vigorous use of the reins, it will run the course successfully and easily arrive at the finishing line," but if "it holds the reins too loosely or applies the whip more violently than is reasonable, then, like Phaethon or Bellerophon, it will inevitably come crashing down to earth" (Poliziano 1997: 195).

In countering the second of Scala's objections – that what "Epictetus teaches is too demanding and beyond human powers" since "it is nature which commands us to express our grief" at the death of our wife or children – Poliziano parts company with Simplicius and comes up with arguments based on classical history. Many people, he writes, "have abstained from tears and weeping at the death of their loved ones: Solon the Athenian, for instance, and Cato the Censor."<sup>12</sup> Poliziano admits that it "is not easy to do these things, but it is not beyond human powers" since if "something actually exists in one or two people, you cannot deny that the potentiality and capability exists throughout the entire human race" (ibid.: 195–6). We have no information about Scala's reaction to Poliziano's defense of Epictetus; but given Scala's deep-rooted misgivings about the validity and feasibility of Stoic philosophy, it seems unlikely that Poliziano made a convert.

The philosopher-cum-priest Marsilio Ficino (1433–99), another member of the Florentine entourage around Lorenzo de' Medici, was the chief moving force behind the revival of Platonism in the fifteenth century (Garfagnini 1986; Hankins 1990: I 265–366). Although he became a committed Platonist, he was well-informed about Aristotelianism, like all philosophers trained in Italian universities, and regularly cited both Aristotle and his commentators (Kristeller 1944); and after abandoning his youthful enthusiasm for Lucretius, he devoted considerable energy in his later philosophical works to attacking Epicurean materialism, which he perceived as a threat to his own Christian Platonism (Hankins 2013). By contrast, Stoicism, to which he had given equal billing and treatment with Platonism, Aristotelianism and Epicureanism in his 1457 letter *On the Four Sects of Philosophers* (Ficino 1937: 9), was very much at the margins of his mature writings.

Not only are mentions of Stoic philosophy few and far between in Ficino's letters, they are little more than passing comments, almost all to do with the sect's ethical precepts or with the moral character of its founder, drawn from Diogenes's *Life of Zeno*.<sup>13</sup> Ficino compares the Stoic and Aristotelian discussion of the virtues unfavorably with the Platonic approach; he denies that happiness is "found in moral conduct, as the Stoics and Cynics believe," since the practice of moral virtues "is full of toil and difficulty," whereas mankind's goal lies in rest;

he describes the Stoic wise man along with “Plato’s republic and Cicero’s orator” as ideal constructions which do not exist in reality; and he responds to a “Stoic letter” about “the best way of living” by endorsing his correspondent’s belief that “he alone truly lives” who stays “as far away as possible” from the “false life” in which “the soul is joined to the earthly body, not only once, initially by nature, but in being given over to it every day by desire,” though he encloses his own “Platonic letter,” which, he says, will explain “how false this life is and how deceptive” (Ficino 1975–: I 158 and 172; V 71; VI 9).<sup>14</sup>

In his most important treatise, *Platonic Theology*, completed in 1474, Ficino attempts to demonstrate the immortality of the soul solely on rational and philosophical grounds. Because of the subject, Ficino’s references to Stoic philosophy in this work go beyond the usual dimension of moral philosophy, with Zeno, Chrysippus and Cleanthes coming in for criticism on account of their materialist ontology, their identification of God as a natural force which permeates the universe and their belief that the soul is a quality “possessed by the body which is spread through its parts” (Ficino 2001–6: I 15, 29 and 259; II 125). In addition, he recounts anecdotes about the early Greek Stoics from Book 7 of Diogenes Laertius’s *Lives* (ibid.: III 43; IV 115) and about Posidonius, a Stoic philosopher of the middle period, from Cicero’s *On the Nature of the Gods* (ibid.: III 15; V 271–3). As the title of Ficino’s treatise clearly indicates, he relies primarily on Platonic arguments; and while the Stoics are not entirely left aside, they have only an incidental part in his ambitious program.

### The early sixteenth century

In his treatise *On the Immortality of the Soul*, published in 1516, Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), a prominent philosopher in the secular Aristotelian tradition which had flourished in Italian universities since the fourteenth century (Kristeller 1964; Kraye 2010; Perfetti 2012), dealt with the same issue which the Christian Platonist Ficino had confronted some four decades earlier in his *Platonic Theology*; and, like Ficino, Pomponazzi employed only arguments based on reason and philosophy. Their different philosophical orientations, however, led them to opposing conclusions: while Ficino used Platonic doctrines to demonstrate that the soul was immortal, Pomponazzi used Aristotelian ones to prove that it could not survive the death of the body; and while Ficino held that philosophy, especially Platonism, offered support for the Christian belief in the immortality of the soul, Pomponazzi maintained that this belief was entirely a matter of faith, based on the authority of the Bible and the church, not on any philosophical proofs (Kraye 2010: 96–103). Stoic philosophy, as we have seen, was tangential to Ficino’s case for the soul’s immortality; but a central Stoic doctrine was pivotal in Pomponazzi’s defense of his highly controversial position that, in terms of philosophy, the soul was mortal.

One of the key objections to the notion that the soul perished with the body was that it undermined God’s just governance of the universe because when, as often happened, good deeds went unrewarded and evil ones unpunished in the present life, this injustice could not be rectified in the afterlife (Pomponazzi 1948: 347–8). Pomponazzi counters this objection by arguing that virtue is its own reward and vice its own punishment, so that, even without an afterlife, virtue is always rewarded and vice always punished. Drawing a distinction between “essential” (*essentiale*) and “accidental” (*accidentale*) rewards and punishments, he says that the “essential reward of virtue is virtue itself,” for “human nature can possess nothing greater than virtue itself, since it alone makes man secure and removed from every perturbation,” while the essential punishment of vice is guilt; and just as guilt is far worse than the accidental punishment of paying a penalty, so a person who acts virtuously “without hope of

reward” is considered more virtuous than one who does so in hope of an accidental reward and is therefore rewarded “more essentially” (*magis essentialiter*) than one who is rewarded “accidentally” (*accidentaliter*) (Pomponazzi 1948: 361–3; 1954: 200–4; Kristeller 1956b). Although Pomponazzi employs the scholastic terminology and ponderous style of argumentation characteristic of Aristotelian university philosophers, the doctrine he presents is recognizably Stoic. The texts he adduces in support of it, however, are by Plato (*Apology* 41d, which he incorrectly cites as *Crito*) and Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.11 and 7.6; and *Problems* 30.11).<sup>15</sup> This is probably because he realized that Aristotle and Plato, the most renowned philosophers of antiquity, would carry much more weight on this crucial issue than the Stoics, who had not yet achieved a position of undisputed authority in Renaissance philosophy.

For very different reasons, Alexander of Aphrodisias also did not mention the Stoics in his treatise *On Fate*, even though it was directed against their determinist doctrines. Alexander’s decision not to name his opponents was most likely motivated by his desire to confront determinism as an independent philosophical position, rather than as a part of the Stoic system (Alexander of Aphrodisias 1983: 19–20). When, however, Girolamo Bagolino, an Aristotelian professor at the University of Padua in the 1510s and 20s, translated the treatise into Latin in 1516,<sup>16</sup> he was able to identify the Stoics as Alexander’s target by relying on Aulus Gellius’s quotation (*Attic Nights* 7.2.3) of Chrysippus’s definition of fate (Kraye 2008: 8–10). So when Pomponazzi read the treatise in Bagolino’s Latin version, he knew that Alexander was attacking the Stoics. Pomponazzi did not, however, share Alexander’s hostility to Stoic determinism and, in fact, explicitly defended it, in his treatise *On Fate, Free Will and Predestination*, written in 1520 but published posthumously in 1567,<sup>17</sup> as more coherent, on a purely philosophical level, than either Peripatetic or Christian providentialism. Aristotle, Pomponazzi claims, contradicted his own principle that motion cannot be self-initiated, set out in *Physics* 8, when, for the sake of promoting moral responsibility in works such as the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he endorsed the notion of free will (Pomponazzi 2004a: II 548–53).<sup>18</sup> As for the Christian belief in divine providence, Pomponazzi maintains that, from a strictly philosophical perspective, it left the omnipotent Christian God vulnerable to the accusation of injustice, since he had not eliminated evil and sin from the world, even though he had the power to do so. Stoic fate, by contrast, was a product of the eternal and immutable structure of the universe, to which even the divinity was subservient (*ibid.*: I 414–16). Once again, therefore, Pomponazzi has recourse to a Stoic doctrine, this time identified as such, for the purposes of theodicy, finding in the pagan sect powerful philosophical vindications of divine justice.

After surveying all the views, both philosophical and religious, on determinism and providence, Pomponazzi concludes that the opinion of the Stoics was the most consistent and the least likely to be contradicted. Nevertheless, on the grounds of faith, which he always insisted was superior to philosophical reasoning, he accepted the truth of the church’s position on divine providence (*ibid.*: I 448–9, and II 892–9), just as he accepted its decree on the immortality of the soul.

In addition to Alexander, Pomponazzi’s sources of information about Stoicism included Cicero, Seneca and Diogenes Laertius. Yet his account of Stoic determinism bears more relation to his own brand of Aristotelian astral fatalism than it does to the authentic philosophy of the Stoics. Rather than referring to specific doctrines of individual Stoic philosophers such as Zeno or Chrysippus, he instead uses the generic label “the Stoics,” often, it seems, to provide a cover for his polemical assertion of astrological determinism – “we see that sublunary matters are governed by the heavenly bodies”<sup>19</sup> – against both Alexandrist and Christian Aristotelianism (*ibid.*: I lxi–lxii, xcii–cix).

Stoicism occupied a paradoxical place in Pomponazzi's philosophy: he associated one of its principal ethical doctrines with Plato and Aristotle, yet presented his own celestial determinism in Stoic guise. Both maneuvers were possible because, in the early decades of the sixteenth century, Stoicism remained to a large extent unexplored territory on the fringes of Renaissance philosophy.

## Notes

- 1 "Non eget alterius ope, aut fortunae adminiculis virtus ... cum in ea satis sit praesidii ad bene beateque vivendum" (Bracciolini 1964: 83).
- 2 "Quod si opes, divitiae, dignitas ... offerantur honeste, non arbitror ullo modo esse reiiciendas" (Bracciolini 1984: 43).
- 3 Although Poliziano does not mention it, he also took the chapter divisions and titles from Simplicius's commentary; and at times he translated Simplicius's comments, mistaking them for the text of Epictetus (P. Hadot 1987: 334–7, 358–67).
- 4 The year before Poliziano had dedicated his Latin translation of Plato's *Charmides* to Lorenzo (Hanks 1990: II 623–6).
- 5 The authenticity of the *First Alcibiades* is now questioned by some scholars, but it was regarded as a genuine work of Plato in the Renaissance.
- 6 Florence was still in the dangerous aftermath of the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478, which had threatened Medici domination of the city; and Poliziano had recently been dismissed by Lorenzo's wife as tutor to the couple's sons, leaving his prospects in doubt (Kraye 2001: 163–4).
- 7 The Stoa merits only a fleeting reference in his famous *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (Pico della Mirandola 2012: 203); and no Stoic doctrines are included among his 900 theses (Pico della Mirandola 1998).
- 8 Only a few traces of Epictetus can be found in his later philosophical work: he retells a moral fable from *Ench.* 46 both in his 1491 introduction to logic and in his 1492 inaugural lecture on Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* (Poliziano 2010: 41, 119, 249).
- 9 Earlier in the letter, he writes that Zeno "was the first to put forward fixed views on all subjects" and affirmed that "nothing incorporeal existed, not even God himself, whom he declared to be fire" (Scala 2008: 15).
- 10 The Epicurean humanist Cosma Raimondi (d. 1436) criticized "the Stoic view that we should find happiness in virtue alone" on similar grounds: "But since we are composed of a mind *and* a body, why do they leave out of the account of human happiness something that is part of mankind and properly pertains to it?" (Raimondi 1997: 240).
- 11 This passage would later become the centerpiece of the commentary on the *Phaedrus* by Poliziano's friend Marsilio Ficino (Allen 1981), on whom see below.
- 12 Plutarch (*Life of Marcus Cato* 24) states that the Roman statesman and Stoic philosopher bore the loss of his son with equanimity; but, contrary to Poliziano, he describes (*Life of Solon* 6) how the Athenian statesman, poet and sage was transported with grief on hearing a (false) report of his son's death.
- 13 He takes Zeno's indifference to slander from Diogenes Laertius 7.117 and his austere temperament, which was softened by wine, from 7.26 (Ficino 1975–: II 12 and 52).
- 14 In a "speech in praise of medicine," Ficino states, without providing any evidence in support, that "according to the Stoics and the Peripatetics, everything which moves beneath the moon's sphere is created and set in motion for Man's sake" (Ficino 1975–: III 24).
- 15 In responding to another objection, however, he does cite Seneca's assertion (*Letters* 7.54 and *On Consolation to Marcia*, chs 19 and 23) that the "soul is mortal" and that "many other upright and most learned men" agreed because "they thought that virtue alone is happiness, and vice misery" (Pomponazzi 1948: 374).
- 16 A previous translation made at the end of the thirteenth century by William of Moerbeke had little diffusion (Alexander of Aphrodisias 1963: 7) and was apparently unknown to Bagolino.
- 17 The controversy provoked by his treatise *On the Immortality of the Soul* made Pomponazzi cautious about publishing his later works, though they did circulate in manuscript.
- 18 In his lectures on Aristotle's *De partibus*, held from 1521–1524, however, he presented both the Stoic position that temperaments are entirely determined by organic factors and the Peripatetic view that temperaments are predisposed, rather than determined, by the body, without deciding between the two (Pomponazzi 2004b: 222–3; Perfetti 2012: §5).
- 19 "Conspicimus ... ista sublunaria a superioribus corporibus gubernari" (Pomponazzi 2004a: I 326).

## Further reading

For an account of Stoic philosophy from the fourteenth to the late sixteenth century, see J. Kraye, “Stoicism in the Renaissance from Petrarch to Lipsius,” *Grotiana* n.s. 22–3 (2001–2): 23–46. For the impact of Stoic philosophy on Renaissance literature and style, see J. Kraye, “Stoicism and Epicureanism: Philosophical Revival and Literary Repercussions,” in G. P. Norton (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 458–65. For additional bibliography on the medieval and Renaissance *fortuna* of Epictetus and on the translations of Perotti and Poliziano, see G. J. Boter, “Epictetus,” in V. Brown et al. (eds), *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*, vol. 9 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), pp. 12–13, 29 and 34.

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## 10

# ERASMUS, CALVIN, AND THE FACES OF STOICISM IN RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION THOUGHT

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In his classic article “The Two Faces of Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought,” the historian William Bouwsma postulated a confrontation between two polarities in Western culture and explored the ways in which the tension between them constituted an internal struggle within early modern humanism. Noting that “pure” Stoics or Augustinians are hard to find, he nevertheless suggested that the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus (c.1467–1536) exhibited stronger Stoic tendencies, while the French religious reformer John Calvin (1509–64) found in the Latin church father Augustine of Hippo (354–430) “a model of the open, developing spiritual life, of the mind in movement which [was] perhaps the central feature in Augustine’s significance for the Renaissance” (Bouwsma 1990: 52, 68). Subsequent scholarship has sought to answer Bouwsma’s call for closer study of individual figures and to nuance his image of Stoicism in the era of the Renaissance, which Christoph Strohm has rightly criticized as unspecific (Strohm 1996: 121–2). Jill Kraye has argued that Erasmus’s editorial engagement with Seneca (c.4 BCE to 65 CE) launched a “humanist re-evaluation of Seneca” and in particular his moral philosophy that was advanced by Marc-Antoine Muret (1526–85) and found its culmination in the work of Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) (Kraye 2005: 328). At the same time, Peter Walter has questioned Bouwsma’s placement of Erasmus among the more Stoic-minded in light of Erasmus’s clear rejection of traditional Stoic views of the affections (Walter 2008: 522–3). Judgments concerning Calvin’s relationship to Stoicism have been even more diametrically opposed; some have claimed that he baptized Stoicism, while others contend that he was sharply critical of Stoic philosophy and ethics (see Battles and Hugo 1969: 46★–47★). Two recent and nuanced reassessments that find continuity between certain aspects of Stoic anthropology and Calvin’s mature understanding of human agency and his view of the nature of the emotions are by Paul Helm (2012) and Kyle Fedler (2002).

There is no doubt that the relationship of both Erasmus and Calvin to the early modern receptions of Stoicism was extremely complex, highly eclectic, and dependent on the topic in question and the text being investigated. Yet it also seems to me that greater precision is possible in conceptualizing the key roles that these two figures played in shaping the image of

Stoicism in their day. Rather than seek to answer the insoluble question of which of these early sixteenth-century editors of Seneca was more or less Stoic, I explore in what follows two entangled but ultimately divergent paths that point to the related but ultimately distinctive ways that Stoic impulses and themes expressed themselves in their thought. After a brief consideration of the contexts shaping their conceptions of Stoicism, the discussion will examine first the major commonalities and differences in their editorial projects on Seneca. Then the investigation will trace how Erasmus's and Calvin's interactions with themes arising out of the Stoic intellectual tradition in their wider body of writings led them to focus on distinct aspects of Stoic teaching. My delineation of their divergent emphases aims to identify the dominant tendencies in the early sixteenth-century engagement with Stoicism and to suggest that Erasmus and Calvin ultimately mediated and presented different elements of the Stoic heritage to their age. Both reflect the culmination of trends in the reception of Stoicism in the Latin West and also provide bridges to the more systematic assessment and retrieval of Stoic thought in Neostoicism in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

### Contexts for Erasmus's and Calvin's conceptions of Stoicism

Before examining Stoicism and Stoic themes in Erasmus's and Calvin's writings, three points can assist in framing our inquiry. First, Erasmus's (and later, Calvin's) seemingly divergent assessments of Stoic teachings need to be understood in the context of a debate going back to patristic times and recently revived by humanists such as Francesco Petrarch (1304–74) and Lorenzo Valla (1407–57) over the relationship between central Stoic teachings and Christianity. The fact that Erasmus or Calvin can alternately admire and disapprove of figures like Seneca or aspects of Stoic moral philosophy signals a view in continuity with a tradition that had long wrestled with the compatibility of Stoic ideas and Christian faith.

A second matter to bear in mind concerns the vexing fluidity of what counts for Erasmus – as for Calvin – as “Stoic” and what major sources supplied them with their conceptions of Stoic thought. The inherently eclectic, developmental, and unsystematic character of classical Stoicism is one thing, but even more important is the fact that the elements of the Stoic tradition best known to these early modern thinkers (as well as their medieval predecessors) derived primarily from the Roman period and not from classical Greek Stoic thought (Bouwsma 1990: 21; cf. Kraye 2004: 21). Their most important sources for information about Stoic philosophy included Seneca, Cicero, Epictetus, and Plutarch. The subject of Cicero is particularly complicated. As Marcia Colish has traced in exacting and exquisite detail, Cicero's own relationship to Stoicism was both extremely complicated and highly differentiated (Colish 1985: 61–158). Like so many humanists from Petrarch on, Erasmus and Calvin engaged with Cicero's writings on a variety of levels, and it is virtually impossible to isolate the ways in which Cicero might have shaped their image of Stoicism from their broader interactions with the work of and traditions surrounding the esteemed Roman orator and philosopher. Erasmus of course not only read Cicero but also edited his works and launched a heated debate over Ciceronian Latin as the undisputed stylistic norm in his *Ciceronianus* (1528). Calvin cited widely from Cicero in his writings, and a number of scholars have explored though not yet definitively established the role of Cicero in shaping the discussion in Book 1 of Calvin's magnum opus, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (e.g. Leithart 1990; Grisilis 1971), though David Steinmetz has provided a succinct and accurate overview of the general issues (Steinmetz 2009: 149–52). Erasmus and Calvin can both be quite selective, eclectic, and even idiosyncratic in what they consider and present as a Stoic doctrine.

Finally, humanist thinkers were certainly aware of the differences between the schools of classical philosophy, but they not infrequently perceived them to be complementary, as Bouwsma has noted was the case with Platonism and Aristotelianism (Bouwsma 1990: 21). As theologians in a broadly Augustinian tradition, both Erasmus and Calvin perceived common shortcomings in all forms of classical thought when measured against the standard of Christian revelation. Thus they could at times gloss over or ignore substantive philosophical differences more obvious to modern historians and philosophers.

### Erasmus's and Calvin's editions of Seneca

Both Erasmus and Calvin are developmental thinkers who engaged with Stoic ideas early on and continued to seek ways to relate them positively and negatively to their visions of a biblical Christianity over the course of their careers. A key chapter in the story of early sixteenth-century engagements with Stoicism is their editorial work on Seneca. Three brief observations provide an overview of their projects' respective approaches and their place within the early modern revival of Stoicism.

My first observation concerns the major differences in the form and scope of their publications. Erasmus produced two editions of the philosophical and rhetorical works attributed to Seneca, in which he endeavored with increasing but nevertheless limited success to distinguish genuine from inauthentic writings as well as, in the second edition, to identify lost Senecan texts. The first edition appeared in 1515, and a second and revised edition in 1529 (Seneca 1515, 1529). Erasmus attributed to the philosopher Seneca the writings of his father the rhetorician (55 BCE to 40 CE) and included these texts in his collection. (Calvin, too, did not distinguish between the father and son.) Both editions contain very little in the way of annotations or commentary, apart from an edition and commentary by Beatus Rhenanus (1485–1547) on Seneca's satirical treatise *Apocolocyptosis*, which was included in Erasmus's collection. In addition, Erasmus also contributed to a 1514 edition of Seneca's plays, which, however, he attributed to a relative of the Stoic philosopher.<sup>1</sup> Calvin, in contrast, published in 1532 an edition of a single work by Seneca – his treatise *De dementia* – accompanied by a detailed philological-historical commentary that follows an interpretive agenda like the one advocated by Erasmus himself and modeled on Guillaume Budé's (1467–1540) *Annotationes in pandectas* (Calvin 1969).<sup>2</sup> Calvin also made some 300 handwritten annotations to a collection of Seneca's plays from 1541 (Ganoczy and Scheld 1982). Erasmus's and Calvin's approaches to Seneca were motivated by a common humanistic spirit, but they are clearly different in scope, genre, and purpose.

Divergent also are their expressed motivations for the projects that appeared in print. Overall Erasmus is more critical of Seneca, especially in the dedicatory letter to his 1529 edition, which one recent scholar has described as reading “at first sight more like a warning against the book than an advertisement for it” (van Ruler 2008: 180). While it seems unlikely that Erasmus, despite his sharper criticism in the second edition, had a profound change of heart towards Seneca or Stoicism, Calvin clearly responds to this negative attitude and alleges in the preface to his commentary that he wants to defend Seneca against his detractors (Calvin 1969: 5–13). However, in the commentary itself he only rarely springs to Seneca's defense or even passes judgment on his views. The reasons underlying the changes to the tone of Erasmus's preface are complex, reflecting recent humanistic debates over good Latin style, an enthusiasm for Seneca's writings in the Christian West that was tempered by controversy over certain Stoic doctrines, and the long-standing if also disputed tradition that Seneca had been a Christian.<sup>3</sup> What is clear is that Calvin used the opportunity provided by this sort of

derogatory attitude to justify his project. Thus their apparent disagreement is probably less revealing of their overall attitudes toward Stoicism or even Seneca but more important for providing Calvin with the impetus and justification for entering the scholarly arena.

Indeed, Calvin did need to justify his endeavor, seeing as he was an unknown nobody seeking to make a splash with an erudite contribution to current debates over Seneca and Stoicism. His failure to make much of an immediate or obvious impact on his contemporaries constitutes a final point of contrast to Erasmus, whose edition of Seneca was reprinted numerous times beginning in 1537 and was referenced by later editors and commentators like Muret and Lipsius, who carried his revivalist project forward. The impact of Calvin's efforts is much more difficult to determine, but clearly lags behind that of Erasmus. His commentary was apparently ignored in his own day; he claims to have printed the text at his own expense and wrote letters to friends imploring them to use the text in their lectures (Calvin 1969: 387–90). The commentary was included in collected editions of his works beginning in 1576, and several passages were plagiarized by Erasmus's secretary Gilbert Cousin (1506–72) and appeared in Johann Jakob Grynaeus's (1540–1617) edition of the *Adages* at the end of the sixteenth century (Calvin 1969: 392). A more subtle but long-lasting and fruitful effect of Calvin's engagement with Seneca was the mark it left on his method of biblical interpretation (Millet 1992).

These distinctions in approach, attitude, and legacy aside, Erasmus's and Calvin's editorial projects are representative of the humanistic revival of Stoicism that, beginning with Petrarch, distinguished itself from medieval engagements through its superior philological analysis. Although their critical labors on the texts of Seneca, who was one of the major sources for early modern knowledge of Stoicism, already suggest their distinctive ways of engaging and disseminating the Stoic tradition, it is by entering into the other writings of Erasmus and Calvin that we see their respective paths not only become more convoluted but also reach a decisive juncture.

## Erasmus

While Erasmus's editions of Seneca clearly contributed to and advanced the quest for a more precise textual basis for Stoic thought, he also furthered two main areas of substantive inquiry that were to become essential features of the more systematic retrieval of Stoic thought later in the century. On the one hand, he perpetuated and refined the question concerning the compatibility of Stoicism and Christianity and, on the other, he advanced a traditional fascination with Stoic moral philosophy, particularly that of Seneca, and gave decisive impetus to a more systematic approach to this matter.

In the two prefaces to his editions of Seneca, Erasmus addresses the traditional question of Seneca's relationship to Christianity. While he follows Valla (though without naming him) in denying the authenticity of the supposed correspondence between Seneca and the Apostle Paul, he also affirms Jerome's (c.347–420) inclusion of Seneca as the only pagan writer in his *Catalogue of Illustrious Authors* (Erasmus 1910: 53; 1930: 29; 1996: 66; 2012: 48). In general Erasmus endeavored to establish Seneca's authentic writings with more precision in both editions, and clearly thought that his efforts were much more successful in the second. In 1515 he boasted of having cleared away many errors in substance, however, he later declared himself not satisfied with the first edition.<sup>4</sup> In the preface to his second edition, Erasmus details the problems with the first and claims that this new edition offers a corrective view, yielding a different Seneca from the one that had come down, he claims, "in monstrously corrupt form" (Erasmus 1930: 28; 2012: 47). Indeed, here he had further clarified the status

of a number of the writings and refined the texts. This new Seneca was definitely not a Christian; however, Erasmus argues, his moral philosophy has a greater profit for Christians when they realize that it comes from a pagan. He details the ways Seneca deviates from Christian doctrines, provides longer criticisms of his style and philosophy drawn from Quintilian, Suetonius, and Tacitus, and he expands his own critical assessment. The overall effect is a more realistic portrait of Seneca's Stoicism in which both its limits as well as its potential for profiting Christian readers are more clearly delineated, if not yet quite accurately and comprehensively laid out.

Another discussion in which Erasmus engaged and furthered the humanist re-evaluation of Stoicism and its relationship to Christianity can be found in the lampooning of Seneca and the Stoic sage in *Praise of Folly* (Erasmus 1979: 106, 116; 1989: 29, 38). Folly's persistent complaints about Stoicism – especially of the idea of the wise man as allegedly free from all emotion – are consonant with Italian humanist critiques of Stoic views of virtue and likely reflect yet another unacknowledged borrowing from Valla (Panizza 1995; cf. Kraye 2004: 30). But just as with Erasmus's prefaces to his Seneca editions, these criticisms need not signal the wholesale rejection of Stoicism; rather, they may be seen as contributing to a more precise rendering of the limits of its utility for a Christian readership. Van Ruler has argued that there is an organic relationship between *Folly's* satirical anti-Stoicism and the more positive and nuanced appropriation of Stoic ideas about virtue in the *Enchiridion* (1503) (Erasmus 1988c). Erasmus expressly said that both works together offer the same teaching but in a different form, and van Ruler suggests that the end of *Folly* represents Erasmus's "Christian answer to the question of moral ends" that is presented as an alternative to the Stoic and Epicurean options found in the *Enchiridion* and the earlier parts of *Folly* (van Ruler 2008: 179–83). Walter has pointed to a similar line of demarcation between Stoic and Christian teaching on the affections also in Erasmus's discussion of the adage *festina lente* in 1508 (Walter 2008: 512). In weighing the relative merits of Platonic, Peripatetic, and Stoic understandings of the role of the emotions in the path to virtue, Erasmus reflects traditional Christian judgments going back as least as far as Augustine (Walter 2008: 523). Yet the unparalleled popularity of writings like the *Adages*, *Folly*, and the *Enchiridion*, combined with Erasmus's philological work, did much to invite reflection on the question of the compatibility of Stoicism and Christianity and, while not systematically resolving it, indicated more clearly the key issues needing resolution.

While there is certainly much going on in all of these richly complicated texts, a common theme concerns the limits of the specifically *moral* teachings of Stoicism for Erasmus's Christian philosophy, and it is here that we see the second dimension of his contribution. Of course, Erasmus also engages with non-ethical elements of Stoic philosophy, for example, criticizing Seneca's speaking of gods and goddesses and his doubts about the afterlife in his 1529 preface to Seneca's works (Erasmus 1930: 30; 2012: 50). Recent scholarship has filled out the image of Erasmus as a theologian and spiritual writer and no mere moralist, and one of his earliest critical engagements with the idea of the Stoic *sapiens* is found in his Christological disagreement with John Colet (1467–1519) at the turn of the century about Christ's emotional state in Gethsemane, published as *A Short Debate concerning the Distress, Alarm, and Sorrow of Jesus* (*De taedio* ... 1503) (Erasmus 1704, 1988b). However, the weight of his references to Seneca and Stoicism more broadly center on moral concerns and include, as we would expect, both negative and positive assessments. On the one hand are his many criticisms of Stoic views of the emotions, a category which includes his discussion of Christ in the garden, since Erasmus's interest there is in Christ's humanity, his capacity for mental suffering, and the nature of his emotional response to his impending death. On the other are his more

positive engagements with and appropriations of quotations from Seneca and other Stoics in the *Adages* and the *Parabolae* and other works.<sup>5</sup> These mixed judgments point to a complex attitude toward Stoic ethics, one that explicitly recognizes the complicated nature of Stoic thought itself. Indeed, at one point in *De taedio* Erasmus affirms Panaetius as “the most learned of the Stoics” for rejecting the idea of apathy (Erasmus 1704: 1273; 1988b: 31).<sup>6</sup>

Erasmus’s engagement with Stoic ideas of morality and virtue is not surprising, given the strong traditional and contemporary interest in Stoic ethics and particularly in Seneca’s moral philosophy and his pithy axioms, which were well known and widely quoted (Trillitzsch 1971: 250; Walter 2008: 508–9; Kraye 2004: 37–8). Furthering this impulse in his enormously popular writings, Erasmus not only transmits the traditional interest in Stoic ethics but also integrates Christian humanist critiques, particularly of the ideal of apathy, into his own philosophy of Christ, thereby preparing the way for more systematic appropriations of Stoic ethics by proposing lines of continuity and disjunction. In both the *Enchiridion* and in *Hyperaspistes* (1526) (his response to Luther’s 1525 treatise, *On the Bondage of the Will*), Erasmus alludes to or directly cites Seneca’s statement “the great part of goodness is the desire to be good” and with this suggests an affinity between the Stoic and Christian ideas of virtue (see Walter 2008: 523–4; Trillitzsch 1971: 249).<sup>7</sup> But ultimately he draws a line, and an Augustinian one at that, between Stoic and Christian philosophy. A particularly salient example of this type of interaction can be seen in his 1533 explanation of the Apostles’ Creed, where the catechist notes at the end of the first lesson that Stoic philosophy “promises peace of mind, but only in this life, and a false peace at that. For nothing gives true peace to our souls except the grace of Christ, with which the Stoics have no acquaintance, even in dreams” (Erasmus 1977: 214; 1988a: 246).

Jan Papy’s summation of the importance of Erasmus for the sixteenth-century image of Seneca might be expanded to include Erasmus’s contribution to the reception of Stoic philosophy in general: “It is precisely this Erasmian assessment of Seneca which would remain the standard until the end of the sixteenth century: appreciation – with certain limitations – of Seneca’s ethical views; rejection – with a certain tolerance – of his style” (Papy 2002: 19). Thus in addition to laying the foundation for a sounder philological retrieval of Stoicism, Erasmus presented Stoicism to his contemporaries with a decidedly moral countenance and pressed to new levels the traditional question of the compatibility of Stoic theories of human action and virtue with Christian understandings of nature and grace.

### Calvin

Calvin shares Erasmus’s strong interest in ethical matters and questions surrounding the human will and emotions, and in his discussions of these matters he often refers explicitly or implicitly to Stoic teachings, echoing Erasmus’s and others’ sharp critiques of the ideal of apathy and questioning Stoic views on the place of the emotions in moral life. Moreover, as for Erasmus, Calvin’s engagement with Stoic anthropology spills over into his discussion of Christology and is intimately connected to debates over fate, chance, and providence that have implications for his doctrine of God. Indeed, Erasmus’s infamous dispute with Luther over the freedom or bondage of the will could be seen as the opening salvo in the sixteenth-century renewal of earlier theological debates on these matters. Yet, as abiding as Calvin’s interest was in the anthropological and moral concerns that featured most prominently in Erasmus’s engagement with Stoicism, his more robust discussions of the topics of providence and predestination and his responses to the backlash that his treatment of these topics engendered forced him to engage repeatedly with the Stoic doctrine of fate. In his ongoing

efforts to defend his doctrines of providence and election from the charge of Stoic necessity, Calvin perpetuated an image of Stoicism with a more theological and metaphysical face. As was the case with Erasmus's moral image of Stoicism, Calvin's more cosmically themed engagement with the same philosophical tradition had roots in earlier Christian and more recent humanist debates over providence, fate, and fortune.<sup>8</sup> In pressing his case, Calvin intensified these debates and refined the question of the harmony and disjunction between Stoic visions of cosmic order and his Christian theology of creation and providence.

In many subtle ways themes usually associated with Stoic anthropology and ethics permeate Calvin's discussions of human nature and moral capacity. Building on the foundations laid by Charles Partee in his *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Partee 1977), several studies have explored these topics in more detail (e.g. Backus 2003: 63–100; Helm 2012; Fedler 2002; Leithart 1993a, 1993b, 1994). A few salient examples will illustrate how Calvin shares in the sixteenth-century re-evaluation of Stoic ethics represented by Erasmus. In his commentary on Seneca's *De clementia*, Calvin echoes the traditional view that among Seneca's many virtues, "it is in dealing with matters ethical, that he reigns supreme" (Calvin 1969: 10–11). In the commentary itself, Calvin engages critically Stoic ideas about the constitution of the soul, the grounds of human action, the nature of morality, and the classification of vices and virtues (Pitkin 2015; cf. Monheit 1988: 66–7; Backus 2003: 63–100). His mature understandings of these topics are fleshed out more fully in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536–59) and other writings. In the *Institutes*, Calvin's references to classical philosophy are often general and eclectic, but at several points he mentions or alludes to concepts that are specifically Stoic, or shared by Stoics and other schools of thought, both ancient and contemporary. These include the opening line in which Calvin defines all true and sound wisdom as consisting of knowledge of God and self; the image of the human being as a microcosm; the notion that God can be sought within; and the understanding of humans as rational creatures distinguished from beasts through their reasoning capacity (*Inst.* 1.1.1, 1.5.3, 1:15.3, 2.2.12, 2.2.17, in Calvin 1960).<sup>9</sup>

For Calvin, of course, the Stoics like other secular philosophers fall short in their inability to grasp the fallenness of human nature, and thus he deems their insights only partially valid. Repeatedly he qualifies key principles of Stoic ethics; for example, he contends that the Stoic idea of "living according to nature" fails to take sin seriously (*Inst.* 3.6.3).<sup>10</sup> He affirms the idea of the kinship of all humanity but grounds this in the common image of God and urges pity toward fellow humans who are suffering (*Inst.* 3.6.6–7).<sup>11</sup> Thus, like Erasmus, he rejects the Stoic ideal of apathy. In his commentary on *De clementia*, Calvin argued against Seneca that pity was not a vice but rather a virtue (Calvin 1969: 358–9; cf. Pitkin 2015). In the *Institutes*, he contends that a natural feeling of sorrow is consistent with Christian patience in adversity (*Inst.* 3.8.9–11).<sup>12</sup> In this latter discussion he rails against some Christians whom he calls "new Stoics" and holds up the example of Christ in Gethsemane to counter their "iron philosophy" (*Inst.* 3.8.9; cf. Bohatec 1950: 408–11).

Calvin thus mirrors the kind of appreciation within limits of the ethical teachings of Stoicism that we saw in Erasmus, and specifying those limits enabled him to appropriate positively aspects of Stoic thought in his writings and work in Geneva while at other times criticizing extreme applications of Stoic moral tenets. Scholars continue to explore the parallels between Calvin and Stoic ideas of virtue, though their judgments about Stoic influences in Calvin's view of ethics and the Christian life diverge not only in *how* they envision Calvin to be indebted to Stoicism but also in *whether* or not they think that this is a positive thing. Kyle Fedler has argued that Calvin "has a Stoic vision of the emotions" as a type of judgment, "intricately connected" to what we desire and believe, but that he diverges from the Stoic

idea that emotions are false opinions and therefore have no place in the virtuous life, seeing emotions instead as essential aspects of human nature and central to the moral life, needing transformation through sanctification and not eradication (Fedler 2002: 134, 138). Ford Lewis Battles has found manuscript evidence to suggest that Seneca and Stoicism played a supporting role in Calvin's efforts to implement moral reforms in Geneva (Battles 1965). In a series of articles, Peter Leithart has investigated Calvin's indebtedness to Stoic thought in his understanding of Christian mortification and moderation in Christian living and criticized Calvin for departing from so-called biblical views and Calvin's own sacramental vision on certain matters, such as the use of clothing and jewelry (Leithart 1993a, 1993b, 1994).

However, this ongoing critical engagement in the realm of ethics and anthropology by no means exhausts or even constitutes the main focus of Calvin's interactions with Stoic themes. For although he shared Erasmus's criticism of the Stoic ideal of apathy and his emphasis on the need for grace (if at the same time dissenting from Erasmus's view of its nature and operation), Calvin's anthropology differed from Erasmus's in his deeper sense of the noetic and volitional effects of human sinfulness. This key difference leads him to echo the understanding of fallen human nature and divine sovereignty expressed in Luther's *On the Bondage of the Will*. But in exploring the implications of this view of human nature in the *Institutes* and in treatises in the 1540s and 1550s, Calvin also articulated and repeatedly advanced a more comprehensive view of *divine* agency, arguing for God's all-encompassing providence over nature and human affairs and for God's absolute election or reprobation of each individual soul. In response to criticisms from Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed contemporaries, Calvin was forced to defend his teaching from charges of Stoic fatalism.

Once again, a few highlights from this large body of literature serve to trace the contours of this theme, which occasioned such great controversy that Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) referred to Calvin as “Zeno” in a letter complaining about the Genevan debates in the early 1550s (Melanchthon 1840: 930; Pitkin 2004). One of Calvin's earliest repudiations of the allegation that he taught the Stoic doctrine of fate appears in the second edition of the *Institutes*, published in Latin in 1539 and in French in 1541. In chapter 8, Calvin first discusses predestination, according to which God elects some to grace and reprobates others. He then turns to the topic of providence, in which he argues that God actively sustains the entire world and regulates the course of history in all its details. Under both topics, Calvin addresses the issue of necessity: election and reprobation, and indeed, the fall into sin itself, occur through God's predestination; likewise, all things that happen in the world take place by God's providence. Defending the latter claim against allegations that it is equivalent to the Stoic paradox that everything happens by necessity, Calvin rejects the word “fate” and the charge itself: “For we do not imagine, as the Stoics do, a necessity which is contained in nature for a perpetual connection of all things. But we constitute God as master and regulator of all things; we say that, from the beginning he determined according to his wisdom what he should do, and now according to his power he executes all that he decided” (Calvin 2009: 446; cf. *Inst.* 1.16.8). Calvin agrees with the Stoics that things happen by necessity, but he rejects their naturalism, which he thinks fails to recognize God's independence from and sovereignty over nature and events (Schreiner 1991: 16–19). For Calvin, things happen necessarily, but by God's free decision.<sup>13</sup>

Though Calvin tried in this discussion and in subsequent writings to defend the role of secondary causes and uphold human responsibility for sin and evil and thereby the justness of divine punishment, opponents like Albert Pighius (c.1490–1542) and Sebastian Castellio (1515–63) and even friends like Heinrich Bullinger (1504–75) and Melanchthon found Calvin's efforts wanting. Furthermore, Calvin, for his part, conceived of the doctrine of



providence as one that was presently under attack from various parties, and he ever renewed his defense against the charge of teaching the Stoic doctrine of fate. Following upon the discussion in the 1539/41 *Institutes*, Calvin addressed the issue of determinism in his 1545 treatise against the religious freethinkers that he called “Libertines,” whom he accused of holding a pantheistic determinism that failed to understand the complex role of secondary causes in divine providence (Calvin 1868: 183–98; 1982: 238–58).<sup>14</sup> He again refuted the allegation of teaching Stoic fate in his 1550 treatise *Concerning Scandals*, where he repudiated the Stoic “intricacy of connected causes” (Calvin 1870a: 39; 1978: 53–4). On the heels of the Bolsec affair in 1551–2, he published another polemical defense of his doctrines of predestination and providence that appeared in both Latin and French. Here he sought once more to distinguish his doctrine of providence from Stoic views of the necessity of events, noting that this was an old allegation that ought rightly to have passed into obsolescence (Calvin 1870c: 353–4; 1961: 169–70).<sup>15</sup>

This latter text was a belated response to the second part of a polemical tract by Pighius from the early 1540s – a response that Melanchthon had cautioned Calvin against writing nearly a decade earlier (Melanchthon 1838; see Pitkin 2004: 370–1). Melanchthon correctly perceived the incendiary and divisive effects that might issue from such a publication. Though Calvin’s 1552 *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God* was designated as a joint statement from all the Genevan ministers and was published with the hard-wrung authorization of the Genevan town council, it and the episode that inspired it sparked criticism and controversy over the next decade. The city of Bern forbade its ministers to speak about predestination from the pulpit and wanted Geneva to ban publications on the subject (de Greef 2008: 41). Melanchthon wrote to Joachim Camerarius (1500–75) that the Genevans were reviving debates over Stoic necessity (Melanchthon 1840: 930). In 1557 someone – perhaps Calvin’s long-time nemesis, Castellio or, if not him, likely someone from his intellectual circle in Basel – criticized Calvin’s views on predestination in an anonymous French publication, to which Calvin wrote a short, polemical reply (Calvin 1900). In response to a similar Latin treatise of that same year and complaints about Calvin’s teaching expressed in another tract in the form of fourteen articles, Calvin – again believing the author to be Castellio – published two further defenses of his doctrine in Latin: one on predestination in 1557, entitled *A Brief Reply in Refutation of the Calumnies of a Certain Worthless Person* (Calvin 1870d; 1954), and one on providence in January of the following year, entitled *A Defense of the Secret Providence of God* (Calvin 1870e, 2010).<sup>16</sup> In the latter Calvin complained about being charged once again with teaching Stoic necessity and underscored the difference between his views and the Stoic understanding of fate (Calvin 1870e: 287; 2010: 62). A number of Calvin’s co-Reformers wrote to express their satisfaction with this vigorous defense, but Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563) noted he preferred a more moderate approach to opponents, and François Hotman (1524–90) anticipated the eruption of a new tumult to rival the intra-Protestant disputes over the Eucharist of the preceding thirty years (Peter and Gilmont 1994: 666). In his revisions for the final Latin edition of the *Institutes*, which appeared in 1559, Calvin sought to clarify his position further by separating the discussion of providence from that of predestination and augmenting his treatment of both topics.<sup>17</sup> Thirteen sermons on election, drawn from Calvin’s sermons on Genesis preached in July 1560, appeared in print later that year, and were reissued in 1562 (see Peter and Gilmont 1994: 773–5, 964–5). That same year the Genevan publisher Vincent Brès published the proceedings of the special *congrégation* (communal Bible study) held in December 1551 on the topic of predestination in the wake of Bolsec’s challenges to the position of the Genevan pastors (Calvin 1870b; see Peter and Gilmont 1994: 896–8). Apparently the controversial

issues of divine agency and freedom at the heart of Calvin's doctrines of providence and predestination continued to be not only of interest but also commercially viable.

Calvin's unrelenting efforts to delineate his understanding of God's active and all-encompassing care and agency repeatedly evoked charges that he made God the author of sin and that he undermined human moral responsibility and rendered any notion of punishment for evil senseless. Although these issues of divine and human agency were inextricably linked, Calvin's greatest concern was for the theological implications and for finding a way to reconcile God's omnipotence and freedom. His efforts in this regard reveal a central early modern perception about Stoicism, one popularized by Pietro Pompanazzi's (1462–1525) treatise *On Fate*.<sup>18</sup> Though Calvin would have disagreed with much in Pompanazzi's complex work, he tapped into its assumptions about Stoic fatalism and reflected this image to his contemporaries. He thought Stoicism erred in its understanding of the relationship between God and the natural order by subjecting God to a chain of inferior causes and thereby undermining both God's power and free will.

At the same time, Calvin could recognize the complexity of Stoic teaching and affirm continuities with Christian doctrine, even in the area of divine agency. A particularly salient example of this ambiguous reception can be seen in Calvin's 1552 treatise on predestination itself. On the one hand, Calvin judged "let the Stoics have their fate; for us, the free will of God disposes all things" (Calvin 1870c: 353–4; 1961: 170). On the other, earlier in the treatise he explains God's free but constant will by citing Seneca with tacit approval:

To speak in Stoic terms, there is the well-known sentiment of Seneca: God is necessity to himself. With greater reverence and soberness, we would say: God always wills the same thing, and this is the praise of his constancy. Whatever he decrees he effects, and this agrees with his omnipotence. His will is joined with his power, constituting a symmetry worthy of that providence which governs all things.  
(*Calvin 1870c: 215; 1961: 157*)

Thus as Paul Helm has suggested, Calvin's rejection of the Stoic account of providence does not mean that it plays no positive role at all in his conception. Calvin rejects the implications of what he takes to be the Stoic view of divine agency, but, Helm contends, not necessarily its understanding of human agency. Helm has argued that there is considerable coincidence between Calvin's appreciation of secondary causes and Stoic views of human action (Helm 2012). However, Calvin does not explicitly link his understanding of secondary causes to ideas of co-fatedness in later Stoicism.

By repeatedly pursuing the theological dimensions of providence and predestination – at times against the counsel of his friends – Calvin contributed, like Erasmus, to the ongoing early modern debate over the compatibility of Christianity and Stoicism. He engaged in the discussions of Stoic and Christian anthropology and ethics that had been part of Erasmus's legacy, and in fact agreed with and echoed many of Erasmus's positions. Yet the abiding image of Stoicism that he presented to his contemporaries featured prominently a theological facade, and pressed for clarification and resolution of the issues of divine omnipotence, causality, and freedom.

## Conclusion

In the long history of Christian engagement with the rich Stoic tradition, Christian thinkers beginning at least with Tertullian and Augustine have found different aspects of Stoicism

attractive to and profitable for Christians; they have also identified and stressed different ways in which Stoicism and Christianity are incompatible. In early sixteenth-century Europe, Erasmus's broad interaction with Stoic ethics and Calvin's long battle to distinguish his doctrine of providence from Stoic fate represented two divergent emphases, both of which were taken up and addressed in the popular if also controversial effort to reconcile Stoicism and Christianity and seek therein a practical antidote to troubled times, namely, Lipsius's 1584 treatise *On Constancy*.<sup>19</sup>

## Notes

- 1 For details on all of these works, see Trillitzsch 1971.
- 2 On Erasmus as a model for Calvin's method of commentary, see Hugo 1957: 235; cf. 40–1; on Erasmus and Budé, see Beyerhaus 1910: 34–9.
- 3 Helpful on this point is Walter 2006: 126–46. Panizza attributes Erasmus's more critical comments about Seneca in the 1529 edition to a reaction against lectures of Gasparino Barizza (c.1360–1431) (Panizza 1987: 319–32), while Papy judges that Erasmus's views on Seneca's style and on his philosophy changed between the first and the second editions, but that his criticism centers more on his style (Papy 2002: 18).
- 4 For details and references, see the prefatory note to the English edition of the letter to Tomicki (Erasmus 2012: 41).
- 5 On the *Parabola*, see Rummel 1985: 81–7. For the focus on ethical themes, see, for example, Trillitzsch 1971: 247–8; Papy 2002: 19; Walter 2008: 516–20.
- 6 I am grateful to Kirk Essary for this insight.
- 7 The quote is from Seneca, *Ep.* 4.34.3.
- 8 For an overview of the broader context of these debates, see Poppi 1988.
- 9 References to Calvin's *Institutes* (*Inst.*) are cited from the final Latin edition of 1559 according to book, chapter, and section and follow the standard English translation (Calvin 1960). See also Partee 1977: 30–4, 50–3. On the opening line of the *Institutes* and its classical roots and early modern transformations by, for example, Budé and Erasmus, see Bohatec 1950: 241–53.
- 10 On Calvin's criticisms of Stoic ethics, see Partee 1977: 66–72.
- 11 Though Calvin does not explicitly mention Stoicism in this discussion, in his commentary on Seneca he comments on Seneca's statement "the human is a social animal": "among [the Stoics] it is axiomatic that humans have been begotten for the sake of their fellow human beings" (Seneca 2009: 98–9; Calvin 1969: 82–5). He appropriates this precept more positively in *Institutes* 2.1.13. In his commentary on *De clementia*, Calvin explicitly rejected Seneca's classification of pity as a vice and argued that this was rather a virtue (Calvin 1969: 358–9).
- 12 Calvin also distinguishes his argument that all sins are mortal sins from the Stoic doctrine of the equality of sins (Calvin 1969: 3.4.28) and cites a proverb from Seneca on exhorting those in adversity to follow God (Calvin 1969: 3.8.4).
- 13 Relevant to Calvin's vision of God's relation to the created order are also his criticisms of a view he designated as Epicurean and criticized for distancing God from nature and events and denying providence completely. On these connections, see Schreiner 1991: 19–21 and Moreau 1999: 56–9.
- 14 See de Greef 2008: 155–7; Schreiner 1991: 17–19.
- 15 For details about this text, see de Greef 2008: 144–6.
- 16 Castellio's authorship of the treatises to which Calvin replied continues to be accepted in the literature, including by the editor of the recent English translation of Calvin's 1558 treatise (Calvin 2010: 13–31; see also de Greef 2008: 164–5) but the standard bibliography of Calvin's works calls that into question and, in addition, establishes that the 1557 brief reply in Latin was not a translation of the French treatise of the same year but a different work (Peter and Gilmont 1994: 617–19, 647, 663–8).
- 17 For an overview of the development of Calvin's treatment of these topics in the editions of the *Institutes*, see Partee 1977: 136–45. Further discussion of Stoicism and Calvin's doctrines of providence and predestination in Grisilis 1987, Meylan 1992, and Kirby 2003.
- 18 See Poppi 1988: 653–60.
- 19 For discussions of these legacies, see Nicolette Mout 1997, Papy 2004, and the contribution by Jacqueline Lagrée to the present volume (Chapter 11).

## Further reading

Erasmus's editions of Seneca are detailed in Winifried Trillitzsch, "Erasmus und Seneca," *Philologus* 109 (1965): 270–93; reprinted in *Seneca im literarischen Urteil der Antike: Darstellung und Sammlung der Zeugnisse*, 2 vols (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1971), vol. 1, pp. 221–50. Peter Walter takes a more comprehensive look at Erasmus's view of Seneca, discussing texts beyond Erasmus's editions in "'Nihil pulchrius huius praeceptis sanctius': Das Seneca-Bild des Erasmus von Rotterdam," in B. Neymeyr, J. Schmidt, and B. Zimmermann (eds), *Stoizismus in der europäischen Philosophie, Literatur, Kunst, und Politik*, vol. 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), pp. 501–24. Han van Ruler examines Erasmus's indebtedness to Valla and his supposed Epicureanism in relationship to his reception of Stoicism in "'Quid aliud est, quam insanire?' Erasmus, Valla and the Stoic-Epicurean Controversy," in E. Pasini and P. Rossi (eds), *Erasmus da Rotterdam e la cultura Europea* (Florence: SISMEL edizioni del Galluzzo, 2008), pp. 175–98.

The literature on Calvin and Stoicism is vast and to a certain degree contradictory. The introduction to the critical edition of Calvin's commentary on Seneca's *De dementia* provides the most accessible and comprehensive overview of that aspect of his engagement with Stoicism (Ford Lewis Battles and André Malan Hugo, Introduction to John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia*, ed. and trans. F. Battles and A. Hugo, Leiden: Brill, 1969, pp. 3\*–140\*). Charles Partee offers the best introduction to Stoicism in Calvin's theology more generally (*Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, Leiden: Brill, 1977). Kyle Fedler probes the ethical dimensions of Calvin's reception of Stoicism in "Calvin's Burning Heart: Calvin and the Stoics on the Emotions," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 22 (2002): 133–62. The implications for Calvin's view of divine agency – frequently alleged to represent Stoic fatalism – for understandings of human nature, and freedom, are explored in Barbara Pitkin, "The Protestant Zeno: Calvin and the Development of Melancthon's Anthropology," *Journal of Religion* 84 (2004): 345–78.

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# 11

## JUSTUS LIPSIUS AND NEOSTOICISM

*Jacqueline Lagrée*<sup>1</sup>

Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) in many ways revived ancient Stoicism at the end of the Renaissance and was the founder of Neostoicism, a movement which flourished from about 1580 to 1660. During these years, the influence of this renewal of Stoicism was predominantly in the areas of ethics, politics, and the arts (see Lagrée 2010: ch. 7).<sup>2</sup>

### **Lipsius's life**

Justus Lipsius – or Joest Lips – was born in Isque, close to Louvain, on the 18 October 1547, to a landowning Catholic family of the minor gentry. His grandfather, Martin, was a friend of Erasmus. A certain legend describes the night preceding Lipsius's birth wherein his mother had a vision of two white children embracing each other in her room, symbolizing Lipsius's two loves, philology and philosophy. As a bright and precocious student, Lipsius was sent to the Jesuit college in Cologne at the age of 13 where he learned Latin and Greek, and then, at the age of 16, he went to the University of Louvain to study law. Orphaned at the age of 19, he accompanied Cardinal Granvelle to Rome as a secretary (1567–69). He was made Professor of History and Rhetoric at Jena in 1572 and remained there until 1574. In 1577, he obtained a doctor of law degree from Louvain. In 1579, the States of the Province offered him a Chair in History at Leyden. In 1584, he published *De constantia*, a treatise which concerns the characteristically Stoic virtue of constancy, and which saw twenty-four editions and multiple translations. In 1589, he published the *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* in which he shows that kings are the natural protectors of religion and that, to avoid social problems, there should be but one religion in a State.

Despite being a celebrated professor at Leyden, Lipsius left there in 1591, and took up the Chair of History and Latin Literature at Louvain in 1592. (Lipsius was motivated to leave Leyden for a variety of reasons, including certain tensions in international politics, the ambiguity of his religious position, his weak character, his desire for tranquility rather than glory, and the influence of his wife.) Louvain was a very large university where the teaching of Aristotle and St Thomas predominated. But as a professor of Latin, Lipsius had more opportunity to present students with authors whom he particularly admired, especially the Stoics. In 1604, under the guise of making an introduction to his 1605 edition of Seneca (Lipsius 1605), he published both the *Manuductio ad Stoicam philosophiam* and the *Physiologia Stoicorum*. He planned to write a third tome, on Stoic ethics, but this was never written. He died in 1606 and, quite piously, asked his wife to consecrate his best professorial gown to the Virgin Mary.



Lipsius was principally a humanist. He edited the texts of Seneca, which he considered a consolation in the midst of the difficulties of his time (*De constantia*); the *Manuductio* and the *Physiologia* constitute a doxography which presents the Stoic theses on God, the world, the soul, and the model of the sage, etc.; and these works principally facilitate a reading of the texts of imperial Stoicism in order to offer a model of practical and reasonable philosophy, one that is immediately applicable to daily life and that never sacrifices to the exigencies of reason. Lipsius's philosophy is, at once, both rationalist and eclectic (see Lagrée 1994: 21–8).

### ***Lipsius's use of Stoic sources: bonae litterae vs sacrae litterae***

Lipsius, first of all, had to justify his use of pagan philosophy, rather than holy texts, in his discussions of the good life: why prefer the *bonae litterae* to the *sacrae litterae*? He defended this preference based on his position as a professor of Latin, a position distinct from that of a theologian. Speaking about the path to wisdom, he writes in the second preface of *De constantia* (Du Bois 1873: 122):

In traversing [this path], I should think that even human letters offer comfort and, indeed, assistance. I know that Augustine's counsel, in recovering the writings of the philosophers, is to vindicate in our use that which is taken from these unjust possessors.

Like the Israelites who, after having crossed the Red Sea, were able to use the spoils of the Egyptians, Christians at the end of the Renaissance should be able to use the spoils of pagan philosophers so long as they melt down these spoils, as it were, and modify them for their own use. And this idea allowed Lipsius to distinguish himself from two opposing types of philosophy: Skepticism and Aristotelian scholasticism. And it also helped him to advance new ideas such as the right of the individual against tradition, the presence of reason throughout the world, a physical and political world both ordered by laws, and a voluntarist psychology. The obligation to “melt the spoils,” however, introduces a strong constraint: one must read the Stoics, but without departing from orthodox Christian doctrine. There are two possible strategies here: first, one can revive Stoic doctrine but make some adjustments borrowed from Christian Neoplatonism (i.e. concerning the sovereign good, the uniqueness of God, and sin); or second, one can give a pure exposition of the doctrine but not endorse it, and show how it is opposed to Christianity (i.e. by looking at the corporeal nature of the soul or the paradoxes of the Stoic sage).

If all philosophy has its ultimate root in the teaching of Adam and Noah, then this source is lost in Greece and philosophy is constituted from three distinct geographic sources:<sup>3</sup> (1) the Italic with Pythagoras and political philosophy; (2) the Ionian with Thales and the philosophy of nature; (3) the Greek with Socrates, from whom derive the Cyrenaics, the Megarics, Plato, Aristotle, the Academy, the Lyceum, and ultimately the Stoics, masters of moral philosophy. The eclecticism which characterizes the Greek source is nothing more than a movement of return to the original Socratic source (*Man.* 1.5).

## **Physics, metaphysics, and natural theology**

### ***The system***

Cicero emphasized the systematic character of Stoic philosophy. And to illustrate this thesis, Lipsius, prior to Descartes, likened philosophy to a tree where life passes from the roots to the branches:

In a tree, you have a root from which comes the trunk, the larger branches, and the smaller branches, or shoots. It is the same in philosophy: first, there is a principle as the root, then the next principle as the trunk, then minor principles as the branches, and finally there follows a mass of precepts from which emerges the shoots to stimulate and incite souls.

(Man. 2.12)

Root and trunk belong to first philosophy which corresponds to physics. In particular, God is identified both with nature and providence. The trunk reflects the fundamental ontological principle that all that exists is body. And then the branches set forth the principles into a multitude of precepts and rules to govern one's life. The image of the tree allows us to see the logical structure and coherence that is fundamental to Stoic ideas:

It is proper to the Stoics to link all things, and to bind them into a chain, such that there is not only an order, but also a sequence [*sequela*] and cohesion to them. [...] And this is because all things follow from each other: indeed, this is a powerful argument in favor of the truth, for falsehoods are at variance with one another.

(Man. 3.1)

This metaphor reveals the systematic and organic arrangement of all the elements, and permits Lipsius to insist on unity (i.e. one tree, one philosophy), a diversity that is regulated and ordered in its different degrees, and the internal life of everything, which is susceptible to evolve, enlarge, and change. Thus the unity of the school and its life can be reconciled with the diversity of its members; and shifts or developments, much like branches or new leaves, can be incorporated into the regular life of the tree as a whole.

### ***Common notions***

Lipsius describes the Stoic conception of representation and common notions (*koinai ennoiai*) in *Manuductio* 2.16, just before his discussion of the Stoic exhortation, without alluding to the debate with the New Academy on the criterion of truth concerning comprehensive representation. Common notions, the principles and foundations of science and wisdom, are principally internal, originating within us, and they are not deployed but by virtue of experience. They are the seeds of truth or the sparks of divine reason (which is fire).

We know that the Stoics hold that one part of the divine spirit resides in us, and that this is reason itself – which if it shines in its light and place is completely pure, genuine, right, and divine. But now it is shut up in the body, as in a prison,<sup>4</sup> and it is agitated and abducted by opinions. And yet it retains the little flames of its origin and, through itself and by means of its nature, it sees truth and honesty. These little flames – or sparks if you prefer (the Greeks call them sparks, living fires, or the remains of fire) – stretch themselves out and reveal themselves in certain sensations or judgements which are implanted in us, or innate, in nearly all kinds of people and, eminently, in the highest nature.<sup>5</sup>

(Man. 2.11)

Consider the example of the formation of the common notion of the good. It is not innate “but it seems to us (us, the Stoics) that it is through observation, comparing events that

have occurred frequently, that we judge the good and honorable by analogy” (ibid.; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 120.4). This notion, being formed by all in the same way, is common to all and thus universal. But the difficulty here resides in its application to particular cases, as we see in principles such as “one must honor the dead” or “one must follow nature.” Lipsius is ambiguous on this point: in the *Manuductio* he holds the Stoic empirical conception of the formation of notions; but in the *Physiologia*, he tends toward the Platonic archetype and holds that there is a form (i.e. the active principle) which informs inert matter (i.e. the passive principle). But the common notion has more of a practical consequence than a theoretical one:

Their usefulness for all of life and virtue is great, if the same judgement in these matters is applied with integrity. [...] This common notion [i.e. the good], with reason being the guide to true good and evil, must be applied firmly and without error, and not to those things given to you by the crowd, or opinion.

(Man. 2.11)

### ***The two principles and the four elements***

In the *Physiologia Stoicorum*, Lipsius carefully describes the fundamental principles of Stoic physics: the existence of two corporeal<sup>6</sup> and formless principles, agent and patient, identified with God and matter; God’s donation of forms to all things and matter’s receptivity to all things; the four incorporeals (signified, void, place, and time) and the four elements, fire, air, water, and earth. Likewise, he attempts to justify the most unacceptable corporealist theses via his fictional student: qualities, virtues, science, and the truth are all corporeal since “all that exists is body” (*Phys.* 2.4).

The theory of the principles, moreover, plays both an explicative and foundational role for Lipsius. Since the first principle, God (or the principal agent), is nothing other than reason or the spermatic fire, explanation by this principle is also a justification of the foundation: *nihil est sine ratione*.

“Thus indeed both the Platonic philosophers and our philosophers submit all things, from the least to the greatest, to providence: ‘in all things that occur, there is nothing that happens without a reason.’”<sup>7</sup> The theory of the principles, then, directly leads to theology which, itself, justifies the intelligibility of reality. If God is reason, *logos*, and if nothing is without reason, then even the bizarre and unexpected (whether it is new lands, new stars, or disappearing lands) must have an explanation according to universal laws and constants in nature.

### ***A naturalist theology***

God is the subject of Book 1 of the *Physiologia*. He is the principal agent and first cause of everything that exists. We can, with good reason, assimilate him to nature since he is immanent in it and completely mixed in with it (*krasis*), such that the power of nature is nothing other than the power of God. Nature is thus entirely rational and knowable, and to seek to understand it is the principal, and non-superstitious, form of piety. The attributes of God are unity, goodness, wisdom (or intelligence), immutability, and omnipresence. Nevertheless, by reference to St John Damascene, Lipsius corrects this conception of God which renders God overly intelligible for a Christian: natural theology or physics can never give us a foretaste of God (*Phys.* 1.9) of whom the only real knowledge is found in the Bible. And Lipsius mentions this to avoid the apparent risks of being accused of either pantheism or syncretism.

Stoic teaching is generally accused of being pantheistic, which according to Christianity is a heresy. Divine omnipresence does not mean that God is everything, even if He is in all

things. But we should recognize that the application of pantheism to Stoic thought is anachronistic.<sup>8</sup> Pantheism presupposes the univocity of being, the perfect intelligibility of reality, divine omnipresence, the absence of creation, and the rejection of all religious mystery. Neostoicism does not go this far. It certainly recognizes that creation is occult, but it does not deny it, and simply proposes the presence of divine reason in all things.

### ***Physics as metaphysics***

In Lipsius's thinking, physics – and the natural theology which makes up part of it – plays the role which we have traditionally ascribed to metaphysics. The term “metaphysics” is absent from his vocabulary: Lipsius speaks of first philosophy or wisdom. Philosophy (*Man.* 1.16) is composed of the contemplative (i.e. the rational, natural, and mathematical) and the practical (i.e. the ethical, economical, and political). But if we look more closely, we see that Lipsius's contemplative rational philosophy deals with questions of ontology: being is corporeal and is both cause and effect (except God, the principal agent, who is nothing but cause). To seek out what individuates a particular being is to look into its cause, reason, and place in the chain of beings. First philosophy is identified with physics which also comprehends the three of objects of special metaphysics: natural theology (*Phys.* Bk 1), natural cosmology (*Phys.* Bk 2), and rational psychology, which consists in a physical theory of the soul (*Phys.* Bk 3).

### **Anthropology and morality**

The study of human beings, the summit of creation, has two parts: (1) physical anthropology, which studies our formation, our constitution, the nature of our soul and its links with our body; and (2) moral anthropology, which studies our emotions, their regulation, the rules of individual conduct (i.e. morality), and the rules of collective conduct (i.e. politics).

### ***Physics of the soul***

In dealing with the physical nature of the soul, Lipsius faithfully follows Letter 88 (§34) from Seneca to Lucilius: the soul comes from God and can be considered as a part or member of the world soul; it is a warm breath situated in the heart; it is composed of eight parts (the five senses, the voice, the seed, and the ruling part of the soul); it begins at conception and, according to the Stoics, does not survive the death of the body.<sup>9</sup>

The human being is a microcosm which reflects a macranthropic world according to a continuity of Philonian origin<sup>10</sup> in which the soul commands the rest of the body as God commands the world, and in which the human being encapsulates the scale of being: it has the capacity to exist and to mature apparent in minerals (bones) and in plants (hair, nails); it has the capacity to feel and to move itself apparent in animals and to think about angels and God.

The goal of this physical anthropology, sometimes fantastical and which takes some liberties with ancient Stoicism, is to establish and justify moral anthropology, the conception of the passions and the virtues, as is described in the last section of the *Physiologia*:

Let us look at physics according to this end, not as curious inspectors of hidden things, but as attentive cultivators of the mind in order that we, knowing its dignity, may serve its rank and honor. What is its rank? In Seneca's words, “God has the rank in the world that the mind has in human beings.” It is that which commands

and rules, that it may be honored by us, and that which has dominion and control over everything human, including passions and desires. Here is the way to the ultimate end, to felicity, to which the whole Stoa calls us, by its herald and pillar, our Seneca. Tend here, love this and that end which the honest love.

(Phys. 3.19)

### ***Moral anthropology***

For the Stoics, the care of the soul and concern for one's self principally take the form of knowledge and treatment of the passions. Lipsius's theory of the passions is strictly Stoic. A passion is a troubling of the soul which, if continued, degenerates into sickness; it is an "unreasonable movement against nature or an overflowing *hormê*, contrary to right reason" (*Man.* 3.7 = Diog. Laert. 7.115). Passions are neither innate nor natural: they are an assent given to a false representation that sets us on an irresistible tendency for which we are, nevertheless, responsible, since it is the ruling part of the soul which has produced it. Hope and fear are two passions that are particularly dangerous because of their frequency and the perpetual change of one to the other.

This voluntarism implies a valuing of liberty in accordance with both the affirmation of reason and obedience to divine reason. For if the mind is able to be described as both "free and vagabond" and can, by its own movement, escape to the infinite, this liberty in relation to the constraints and limits of the body can only fully emerge in obedience to the principle of cosmic order. The formula of Seneca – *Deo parere libertas est* – appears as a *leitmotif* throughout the *Manuductio*. Human liberty is the power to act according to our will: "they are free who live as they wish, and who are not restricted, restrained, or forced" (*Man.* 3.12). And yet we cannot truly and constantly will something unless we will that which is right.<sup>11</sup> This suffices to explain the Stoic paradox examined in the *Manuductio* in 3.12 in which "only the sage is free and all the others are slaves." True liberty consists in conforming one's will to the divine will, or in other words to serve God who is reason. But how can one serve God? The answer is simple: do philosophy.<sup>12</sup> The figure of the sage is that of a human being who maintains his own health through study. The divinization of the human being – a traditional theme of religion – results more from the ever larger part that reason plays in human nature, rather than a filial adoption by divinity. The emotional aspects of the love of God are noticeably absent: the God which Lipsius describes is cosmic, impersonal, and abstract; the love associated with God is above all an intellectual love.

This liberty, entirely submitted to reason, is something quite difficult to acquire and to exercise. Evils, in the usual sense of sufferings and misfortunes, oppress all human beings, even sages. And it is in response to this scandal that Lipsius wrote his treatise *De constantia*. To relieve the pain of public evils, Lipsius advances four proposals: (1) evils are sent by God; (2) they are necessary and they come from destiny; (3) they are useful to us; and (4) they are neither too serious nor very novel. But these proposals depend upon the idea of providence which follows immediately from the idea of God. But before defining the principles of morality, it is necessary to be clear about the relationship between divine providence and individual destiny.

### ***Providence and destiny***

Providence designates divine intelligence or the "vigilant, perpetual, and secure care with which it knows all things, directs them, and governs them, tied together in an immutable order of which we are ignorant" (*Const.* 1.13). This order can be seen in two ways: in God,

who designs it and knows it, it is providence; and in particular things, it is destiny. True destiny is neither the *fatum* of the astrologers nor natural determinism but “the eternal decree of providence which cannot be more removed from things than providence itself” (*Const.* 1.19). Destiny, thus, is a chain (*catena*) or an interwoven series (*series implexa*) of causes. But this chain is not adamant. Between providence and the laws of nature, there exists a reciprocal relation which is both foundational (i.e. providence founds the legality of nature) and affirmative (i.e. the knowledge of the laws of nature affirms divine providence).

I add, moreover, that if providence is in truth inseparable from fate, it seems yet to be more excellent than fate and to pre-exist it, just as the sun is prior to the light, eternity to time, and intellect to reason.

(*Const.* 1.19)

The sun is not only prior to a light ray as its source, it is the light itself; the rays which illuminate us reveal this original light in space and time. Likewise, the *intellectus* is the insight into the unity of intellectual intuition from which reason (*ratio*) develops step by step. From this nomological conception of nature, we can delineate many models of the intersecting relations between providence and destiny: that which goes from general providence to particular destinies; that which goes from the cause of causes to the particular causes implied in it; that which relays the principle to its consequences; that which is contained *in Deo* to that which exists, developed *a Deo et in rebus*; and finally the root in the first celestial attachment in the chain of causes, on the model of the Homeric chain which relays Zeus to the Earth.<sup>13</sup>

In response to some traditional objections to Stoicism, Lipsius specifies four differences between his views and the Stoic *fatum* (*Const.* 1.20): (1) God is not under destiny but rather destiny is under God; (2) God can alter the course of destiny to perform miracles; (3) there is a residual contingency in secondary causes (such as the will); and (4) destiny is not opposed to free will. God is like a pilot directing a ship: he leaves the will (i.e. the passenger) some space to improvise or to move around, but only in the direction determined by the movement of the ship.

Let us examine some of the consequences and uses of this conception of providence. This conception has metaphysical implications: if providence is intelligent and its causality is rational, then everything has meaning and justification, even if it is unknown to us. The moral implications of this conception include the fact that this voluntarist philosophy defends the liberty of the mind before the deliverances of fortune; and its attendant fruits are peace of soul, consolation, and contentment (*Phys.* 1.17). There are also political implications: this position defends obedience and cooperation, as opposed to rebellion and flight. There are also religious and theological implications present as this doctrine refuses to enter into debates about grace, and facilitates the simple acceptance of divine will. Setting aside the question of divine prescience also has the effect of setting aside the disputed question of predestination.

Lipsius does not seek to justify the Stoic *fatum* by assimilating it to particular grace. Destiny is the law of nature and that which happens to a being; it is not a particular assistance given by God, even if spirits (or angels) are sometimes its instruments. This conception is naturalistic and deterministic. The result here, as a consequence of the theory framed as it is, is a gamble on the integral rationality of the real – *nihil sine ratione* (*Phys.* 1.11) – and there is also a foundational ontological optimism which corresponds to an immanentist perspective on divinity, since providence extends to everything. Divine inscrutability forbids all pretensions to “enter into the secret counsels of God,” since God is just as much transcendent as immanent, present everywhere but absolutely unknowable.

Neostoicism defends a rational naturalism, since providence is taken from naturalism: that which arrives by destiny is produced *per naturam et rationem*, and destiny is, at once, cause, truth, nature, and necessity (*Phys.* 1.12). Divine liberty is defined as internal necessity.<sup>14</sup> This philosophy ultimately defends the force of the soul and the virtue of constancy; it considers providence without grace, and thus lends itself to being accused of Pelagianism.<sup>15</sup>

### ***A minimalist morality***

Ethics was the most lively and influential part of classical Stoicism. Those who refer to Stoicism generally recommend the reading of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius in order to recommend a life lived according to nature, accepting misfortunes with constancy. And yet, this ethics is, in a sense, minimalist and Lipsius does little to develop it. Ethics is comprised of the fundamental precept to live according to nature, the revival of the theory of the good and the indifferents, the theme of the eradication of the passions, and the critique of certain moral paradoxes, such as the equality of faults or the right of the sage to commit suicide.

The fundamental rule of Stoic ethics – to follow nature – was already the object of a series of elucidations and continued explanations in ancient Stoicism. Lipsius extensively analyses these in the *Manuductio* and, beginning with a late formulation of Seneca, says that to follow nature signifies “living in accord with nature and oneself” (*convenienter vivere secundum unam rationem et concordem sibi*).<sup>16</sup> To find the proper meaning of this rule, it is necessary to specify what we mean by “nature”: it is not spontaneous impulses (as these impulses can be vitiated by a bad education) but total nature which is bound up with God. This agreement, or accord, with nature can be understood in three ways: (1) the agreement with common nature (2.16); (2) the agreement with reason or the coherence of life (2.17); and (3) the agreement with virtue or the rightness of life (2.18). Two practical shifts are notable here in relation to ancient Stoicism: first of all, the insistence placed on the coherence of life, the agreement of theory and practice, the constancy of resolution and then obedience to God. And from this comes the primacy of the virtue of constancy and the insistence placed on the virtue of obedience. Lipsius writes that this rule has two facets: “the first is to obey the commands of God and reason, and the second is to become imitators of these things through virtue” (*Man.* 2.19).

Stoic morality proposes a model of a coherent and constant life for, as Seneca says, the only thing which we can follow indefinitely without contradiction is the good. This coherence is a structure with both a logical and a theological meaning: the *sequela Dei* consists in following God with the revival of a wise formula,<sup>17</sup> the Neoplatonic, *homoïôsis tōi theōi*. But to imitate and follow God, we must follow reason or law and, in this picture, the imitation of the sage takes the place of the imitation of Christ. This objective of coherence suffices to alleviate passions, which are disagreements of the mind with itself (*discors animus*; *Const.* 1.3). In failing to find the time to develop a treatise on ethics, Lipsius does not have recourse to a particular treatment of the passions and does not respond to the question that traverses Neostoicism: should we eradicate or restrain the passions?

### ***The good and the indifferents***

The good is the natural end of the spontaneous movement of all that lives, from the plant driven only to conserve itself to human beings equipped with language and reason who are able to choose that which is most excellent. The proper end of human beings is the good, and not another value such as the true. The good, like the true, is not immediately given to the understanding: it must be sought out, but once found it is recognized and appreciated.

The good is defined as “being and acting according to nature”; it consists in the use of right reason or in the firm disposition of our will to follow that which is honest and fitting. But is this ultimate end complete on its own or is it also necessary to have health and useful provisions in order to be happy? Lipsius tends to accentuate the assimilation of the good to the useful and thus to value the preferables: “Does it matter whether I call them ‘goods’ or ‘benefits’? If ‘goods,’ I am incited and pushed to seek them out. If ‘benefits,’ I teach that they touch on the ends of the good and should be led in with judgement” (*Man.* 2.24). Being a “good of the second rank,” the preferable is not denuded of value. The *proficiens* who has not yet attained wisdom must be able to use practical rules founded on clear conceptual distinctions in order not to confuse the advantageous with the good, the useable with the truly useful, and that which we can take with that which we must seek out.

It is necessary then to deal with the theory of the indifferents. The only and true good is honesty, or the virtue which spontaneously elicits self-desire (*appetitus sui*) in reasonable human beings. The indifferents are the object of meticulous distinctions (*Man.* 2.22) between the preferables (which have a value without being a good, such as health, material well-being, and a good reputation), indifferents to avoid (such as poverty, sickness, weakness, and death), and neutral indifferents (such as the movement of my finger or the number of hairs on my head). But the concept of the indifferent has been mostly defined by its usage rather than by its intrinsic value or its relation to happiness.

Lipsius retains the thesis according to which virtue suffices for beatitude, which is defended by all the ancient sages, as well as the equality or connection of the virtues founded on the unity of rightness. The virtues are linked together: their structure expresses their inseparability and hence their equality; all are equally and simultaneously required, as we cannot have one without equally having all the others. And so there is no prudence without strength, justice, or temperance: “Prudence, when it involves giving each their due, is justice; when it involves choice, it is temperance, and when it involves endurance, it is fortitude” (*Man.* 3.4).<sup>18</sup> But from this thesis, there follow certain paradoxes, such as the equality of the sages, the constancy of their happiness, and their self-sufficiency; the sage alone is free, rich, handsome, regal, magistrate, seer, rhetorician, and even priest, since he is the sole knower of divine matters who contains divinity within himself better than all others.

There are, nevertheless, certain difficulties here such as the equality of faults, the rejection of forgiveness, and the right to suicide. The paradox of the equality of faults (examined in *Man.* 3.21) follows directly from the thesis of the unity of virtue and of the radical fissure established between rightness and badness, the good and the bad. If Lipsius condemns this, it is more as a jurist than as a moralist, for this leads to the identification of simple error with trespass and crime, and thus renders impossible all juridical procedure. After having recalled the formal justification that all fault or error is equally (i.e. formally) outside of rightness, Lipsius distinguishes between faults, not according to the intention behind them, but according to the material nature of the fault and its effects. The negligent pilot commits a more serious fault if his negligence puts cargo that is more precious in jeopardy. And so faults are equal without being similar: they are formally equal as being opposed to that which is right but they are dissimilar by virtue of the respective differences of their material nature and the seriousness of their effects.

Lipsius reformulates the theory that the Stoic sage refuses to forgive: if forgiveness is the remission of a merited punishment, the sage does not forgive but punishes or at best exercises clemency and mercy, without doing away with the demands of punishment. He likewise reformulates the idea that the Stoic sage lacks pity: the apathy of the sage is neither equanimity nor insensibility. The sage feels pain without letting it trouble his soul: “The Stoic sage



endures evil, but overcomes it by reason” (*Const.* 1.12). But there remains an unresolvable paradox in which the sage has the right to commit suicide.

The Stoics affirm not only that the sage can bring death to himself, but even that he must in order to preserve his liberty: “Whoever has learned to die, has unlearned how to serve,” according to Seneca (*Ep.* 26). Despite attempts to water down this idea,<sup>19</sup> this thesis is absolutely unacceptable, even considering death as an indifferent. Lipsius recalls first of all the almost unanimous disagreement of ancient authors with the Stoics on this point,<sup>20</sup> and then he also refers to the teachings of the holy books. His response to this question is clearly negative: “I hold that it has been generally taught that death is not something we should choose: and on this point I do not agree with the Stoics” (*Man.* 3.23).

But the true reason for this rejection of suicide is not in the above passage: voluntary suicide is a form of pride. And it is on this specific point that Lipsius, the *philosophus Christianus*, separates himself from the *Stoicus*. The Stoics affirmed that the sage is equal to God because he shares the same virtue (*Man.* 3.14; Seneca, *Ep.* 73.12). And herein lies the fundamental error: to be sure, the virtue is formally the same, but it is materially different in duration, force, and power. The sage can indeed be the companion or retainer of divinity, but he can never be His equal; Stoicism, moreover, makes the sage’s virtue not only equal to God, but superior, because he becomes a sage by his own efforts, whereas God is virtuous by nature (*Man.* 3.14). For Lipsius, an irredeemable distance separates human beings from God: in the final analysis, God is as inimitable and unequalable as he is incomprehensible (*Const.* 2.13).

### **Politics and history**

In politics, Lipsius is very conservative. The six books of the *Politics*, just as the *Monita et exempla politicorum*, are devoted to the formation and counsel of princes. If there is a cosmopolitanism of the sages, it is reserved for an elite. On the other hand, Lipsius takes up Tacitus’s description of the masses, similar to the Stoic *stultus*: “[They are] of unstable character, prone to rebellion and strife, eager for change, and opposed to order and quiet” (*Polit.* 4.5).<sup>21</sup> The people are unstable, without judgment, suspicious, credulous, mutinous, contemptuous of public affairs, brave in words yet cowardly in actions, and excessive in everything. This constitutive instability makes it such that the people represent a multitude perpetually faced with disintegration and whom the prince must unite by the law. And for this reason, pre-eminence is accorded to both the monarchy and the virtue of obedience.

### ***The formation of the prince***

The *Politics* offers one of the last “mirror of princes” written from a humanist perspective. With the help of examples borrowed from antiquity, which concern government or military organization, Lipsius describes the formation of a prince and the virtues expected of him. His formation must comprise the knowledge of history, the geography of his country, the languages spoken by his subjects (and also ancient languages, especially Latin), the reading of great political thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Xenophon, some physics (to protect him from shallow fears), some geometry, some architecture (to understand the construction of fortresses), and ethical instruction in the works of Plutarch and Seneca (*Polit.* 1.10). But the virtues which matter most are prudence, justice, and authority. “The prince without prudence is like the Cyclops without its eye, or like a ship without a compass” (*Polit.* 3.1). This prudence has three sources: *usus*, *memoria*, and *doctrina*. *Usus* is an irreplaceable

knowledge of things and of people acquired by experience. *Memoria* comprises ancient stories and history. Finally, *doctrina* designates the ensemble of knowledge that is useful to the prince.

Lipsius is original in defending for the prince a virtue of doubtful value: mixed prudence (*prudencia mixta*). This virtue is conditioned by factual situations as the State is not constituted by virtuous citizens but by “the shrewd, the insane, the bad, and the dishonest,” and order and public health are ends more necessary to the State than to the prince (*Polit.* 4.13). Obtaining the end of public health in the midst of unfavorable conditions (such as the wickedness of the people and the setbacks of fortune) imposes on the prince, by a certain necessity, a choice of means and conduct described by a classic saying that one must “unite the fox with the lion” (*ibid.*).<sup>22</sup> This *honesta fraus* is a “crafty deliberation done apart from virtue, or the laws, for the good of the prince and his state” (*Polit.* 4.14). Political deception can be light, moderate, or strong. The *levis fraus* (dissimulation) is the only one authorized and recommended; the *media fraus* (deception, corruption) is like a poison mixed with a medication: it is unclear what will happen in such a situation but it will certainly be dangerous and noxious; but this, however, can sometimes be tolerated. The *magna fraus* (treachery, injustice) is entirely condemned.

The other virtues the prince should have are justice, authority, and clemency (*Polit.* 2.10). Justice is connected to *fides* or the obligation to keep one’s promises, the juridical link of natural sociability, and to clemency, distinguished from pity, which metes out punishment after having evaluated a situation. The virtues of the sovereign are, above all, representative virtues, such as majesty. The prince must not conduct himself in such a way that would ruin his authority (such as to appear drunk in public, debauched, or poorly dressed). He must cultivate his appearance, because the sign of power functions as an instrument of power. On the other hand, the virtues of the subject are those of work (i.e. discipline and self-mastery), obedience (which comprehends steadfastness of soul in the midst of adversity), and temperance. Discipline, the virtue par excellence of the soldier, is also a virtue of the citizen. Constancy serves to engender respect for the laws. The steadfastness and resolution of the prince are paralleled by the patience and obedience of the subject. Temperance represents moderation in desires and in consumption; and the refusal of luxury is the first apprenticeship in moderation.

### ***Worry and political unity***

Lipsius’s principal concern in his political reflections is the question of how to protect the unity of the State from the menaces of dissolution, whether they are external (e.g. war) or internal (e.g. factions). Thus he devotes the last two books of the *Politics* to the organization of the army, making the army the model of civic discipline. And it is the same obsession for order which directs Lipsius’s preference for the monarchy (*Polit.* 2.2), that most ancient form of government, which best facilitates justice and which is most durable. This obsession also leads him to hold the theory that the State should have but one religion – *unam religionem in uno regno servari* (*Polit.* 4.3) – though this is paradoxical from a Catholic living in a Reformed country. But this counsel is essentially prudential, since religious conflicts have fomented wars in Europe. This view, however, provoked a polemic with Dick Coornhert, who reproached Lipsius for supporting the control of conscience (against which the Reformation developed). Without entering into the details of this dispute,<sup>23</sup> it is worth noting that, while Coornhert relied on the idea that truth would prevail over heresy in the end, Lipsius saw that there was sedition implicit in religious conflict, even if the conflict was simply theoretical. The perspective that Lipsius invokes is never the triumph of the truth but rather the protection of

order as a condition of peace. If Lipsius supports strict control of religious matters by the prince, it is not in the name of a particular religion, since this counsel is applicable to every political situation: it is, indeed, in the name of public order and peace.

### ***A bourgeois conservatism***

The pages which Lipsius devotes to politics denote, finally, a bourgeois conservatism concerned more with order than progress. Military discipline is the model of civic discipline, and this discipline is self-discipline – the ability to endure cold, hunger, and fatigue. The watchword is no longer *sustine et abstine* but *sustine et labora*. Lipsius's Neostoicism thus ensures the progression from aristocratic and feudal virtues (e.g. heroic courage) to bourgeois virtues (e.g. order and method, simplicity, the valuing of work and duty), and all this in honor of the United Provinces in the Golden Century. The measures presented along with ancient quotations in the *Politics* and modern examples in the *Monita*, such as the unity of leadership, the small number of laws, and the unity of religion, all aim to preserve the unity of the State, which is always menaced from the inside and the outside by the volatility associated with the multitude and with fortune.

### **Conclusion**

In an exemplary manner, Lipsius's Neostoicism makes manifest the difficulties, and even impasses, of a Christianized Stoicism. Lipsius sees in Stoicism a manner of philosophizing without specious subtleties and without dependence on theology. Stoicism, with its distinction of science and assent, is able to defend a right to know and a right not to know:

The sage knows both divine and human things, but in so far as he has need of them and can know them; he knows everything else, and is ignorant of nothing, in order that he may always know what he knows and does not know – and this is enough to keep him from error. I add, moreover, that the sage actually knows few things. The sages do not think that the matters, in which we exert ourselves, and to which we inscribe the title of “learned,” are sciences: using their own proper word, they call them “studies” (or *epitêdeumata*).

(Man. 3.8)

Natural theology describes a God who is transcendent in his incomprehensibility, but immanent in the form of reason that orders the world. By putting the theological questions of grace, original sin, predestination, and redemption in parentheses, as questions relevant to higher considerations, Lipsius is able to defend an optimism that is applicable to times of crisis, despite having a profound pessimism about his own times. This optimism is both archaeological (i.e. the world was created by reason which is present in things but hidden) and eschatological (i.e. the world will be regenerated and restored by the patient and continued work of reason).

The voluntarist Stoic anthropology characterizes the individual devoted to study as the artisan of their own well-being. Hence there is a division between the morality of self-affirmation, involving study and knowledge for the small numbers of those who love wisdom, and the morality of constancy and obedience for the masses and the prince who directs them. But this anthropology emphasizes liberty. “God wished to make human beings free; it pleased him to make them the greatest of all animals, and to make them near to God.

Human beings would not be complete if they were not free” (*Phys.* 1.17). But this liberty is earned by knowledge of the order of the world and its necessity: *Deo parere libertas est*.

The final trait of Lipsius’s work to emphasize here, as it is without doubt the most essential, is its naturalism. This is, first of all, evident in the description of the genesis of the individual and in the formation of the soul, but it is particularly clear in the constitution of a morality separated from any theological foundation. Indeed, Lipsius’s discussions of morality do not concern human misery or sinfulness; they are, rather, a study of the passions as sicknesses, their connections with prejudice, and the means to deliver the mind from the mastery of representations. This naturalism – the foundation of a morality and a theology, if not a natural religion – has as its principle the affirmation of the unity of nature, its integral penetration by reason, and thus its scientifically intelligible character. This explicit and constant rejection of ontological dualism authorizes, at the same time, the affirmation of the harmony of human beings and nature, and the study of a voluntarist organization of society.

For all that, this naturalism is not easily Christianized: the total mixture (*krasis*), physical process, is rejected in favor of the ontologico-logical theory of the deployment of divine reason in causal time. The suicide of the sage, equal to God, is rejected: human beings cannot imitate God, follow in his steps, or equal him. Lipsius did not envision the creation of a new school or even a new age of Stoicism. He wanted to render accessible the physics of the Stoics and, in so doing, the rest of their philosophy. But in doing this, he gave new life to such concepts as common notions, assent, and free necessity; he made theories on the identity of God, nature, and universal reason, on liberty and destiny, and on the constancy of the will all familiar; shifting from erudite knowledge to an intellectual common conscience, he advanced a perspective on the world that is rational, voluntarist, and individualist, and which differentiated itself very quickly from the classical age to become quasi-evidential, a process hiding its source. In a related way, the mechanist movement in science, religious irenicism, the movement of subjective and rational natural rights, the great systems of the classical ages up to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, are all involved in collecting, diffusing, and diffracting this heritage.

## Notes

- 1 Translated by Elliot Rossiter.
- 2 Note the following abbreviations: *Const.* = *De constantia* (Lipsius 1584); *Man.* = *Manuductionis ad Stoicam philosophiam* (Lipsius 1604a); *Phys.* = *Physiologiae Stoicorum* (Lipsius 1604b); *Polit.* = *Politiconum sive civilis doctrinae* (Lipsius 1589).
- 3 For a more complete account of this development, see Lagrée 1994: 21–8.
- 4 This is not a Stoic theme but a Platonic one. According to Stoicism, the body is not a prison because the soul is also a body.
- 5 This could be either God or the sage.
- 6 And here where a whole tradition describes them as being incorporeal.
- 7 Cf. Seneca, *Prov.* 1.3, cited in *Phys.* 1.11.
- 8 The term was coined in 1705 by John Toland.
- 9 On these questions, see Lagrée 1994: 73–6.
- 10 See Philo, *Legum allegoriae* 2.12 (*SVF* 2.458).
- 11 See Cicero, *Parad.* 5.1, cited in *Man.* 3.12.
- 12 Lipsius cites Seneca, *Ep.* 65.16: “The soul is in irons if philosophy does not come to its aid, and by opening up the spectacle of nature, does not send it away from the earth to the divine that it may breath.”
- 13 See Homer, *Iliad* 8.19, cited in *Const.* 1.14.
- 14 Cf. Seneca, *Ben.* 6.21 and *QNat.* 1, and the preface.
- 15 Notably Pascal.

- 16 *Man.* 2.14. For a more complete commentary, see Lagrée 1994: 98–102.
- 17 See Cicero, *Fin.* 3.73: *tempori parere, sequi Deum, se noscere, nihil nimis*. Cicero describes four precepts of the wise whose scope are understandable once referred to physics.
- 18 Lipsius uses a citation from Zeno in Plutarch's *On the Virtue of Morality* 441a (*SVF* 1.201).
- 19 See *Man.* 3.22. Only the sage possesses this right and he is as rare as the phoenix, or furthermore the sage will not leave this life except by the express sign of God (e.g. Zeno's death).
- 20 See *Man.* 3.23, quoting Homer, Pythagoras, Plato, Apuleius, Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 3.7), Euripides, Quintus Curtius, Augustine (*De civ. D.* 19.4), and Quintilian.
- 21 This line is in fact taken from Sallust, *Jug.* 66. Translation from Waszink 2004: 407.
- 22 The saying is used by both Cicero (*Off.* 1.13) and Machiavelli (*Prince* 18).
- 23 See Lagrée 1994: 83–90; Kolakowski 1969: 72–7.

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## 12

# SHAKESPEARE AND EARLY MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE

*Andrew Shifflett*

“All the world’s a stage, / And all the men and women merely players,” says Jaques in *As You Like It* (2.7.139–40).<sup>1</sup> He seems “melancholy” (2.1.26) to his associates because he says such things as this: no witty jests, none of the usual *sprezzatura* from this woodland courtier. But Jaques is more than melancholic. He is a philosopher, or at least he is trying to be one, and his famous commentary on the theater of life can be taken not only as a symptom of his problem but a therapy for it. A man who can bring himself to paroxysms of pity over the plight of a dying deer (2.1.25–66) is in need of *apatheia* – to use a term familiar to readers of this *Handbook* – and that is the state of mind encouraged by Jaques’s survey of the “many parts” that a man “plays” throughout his life. Perhaps he does not catch the tone of Epictetus when the sage advises “thou,” in a sixteenth-century translation of the *Enchiridion*, to “remember that thou art one of the players in an interlude, and must play the part which the author thereof shall appoint,” whether it be “long” or “short,” and whether it be “the beggar, the cripple, the prince, or the private person” (Epictetus 1567: C2v–C3r). Jaques’s treatment of the various parts of life – “infant,” “schoolboy,” “lover,” “soldier,” “justice,” “pantaloan,” and “second childishness and mere oblivion” (2.7.143–66) – smacks more of Juvenal’s Stoic raillery than it does the cool philosophy of the Porch, as if there is something actually distasteful in the parts that one must dutifully play in a world of *adiaphora*. But Duke Senior has just called attention to the “woeful pageants” (2.7.138) of the wider world – “we are not all alone unhappy” (2.7.136), he says – and Jaques feels the need for strong medicine. If unhappiness can come, as Stoics insist, from too much attachment to the parts that one is playing at any point in one’s life, then this is the kind of thinking that might help Jaques and other *proficientes* who share his troubles.

To say this much for Jaques is unusual. It has been more common to refer, as Anne Barton does in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, to his “hopelessness” and to oppose him to “the essential sanity and balance of those characters who stand closer than he to the centre of the play” (Shakespeare 1997: 402). It might also be objected that calling the world a stage is not necessarily Stoic – it is to use one of the great *topoi* of Western literature – and that Jaques’s division of the “acts” of men into “seven ages” (2.7.143) has more to do with Ptolemaic cosmology than with Epictetus.<sup>2</sup> But to speak of life as a series of roles in the context of personal and general unhappiness – to do so with the goal of accepting and perhaps assuaging that unhappiness – continues an ethical tradition that stretches from Epictetus to Shakespeare,

Ben Jonson, and beyond. Here I shall discuss such continuations of Stoicism in early modern English literature, first emphasizing Shakespeare and Shakespearean scholarship, then turning to “baroque” prose style, and finally considering in depth the example of Sir William Cornwallis, a representative but little studied essayist from the period who makes his entrance, so to speak, as a kind of Jaques of the late-Elizabethan fringe and exits happily between the pages of his books. It will be good to keep the melancholy Jaques in mind, for I shall assume throughout that continuing the Stoic tradition meant, at its best, not only expressing established Stoic tenets but *doing* Stoicism and so developing that philosophy in the process.

The main themes of scholarship on the topic of this chapter may be traced to the influence of two Americans born in the 1870s and 1880s: Morris W. Croll, who was hired by Woodrow Wilson in 1905 to be one of Princeton University’s original “preceptor guys” and seems to have left the borough only rarely thereafter (Croll 1966: ix–xii), and T. S. Eliot, who once claimed in a letter to “hate university towns and university people, who are the same everywhere” (Eliot 1988: 74). In Stoicism the academic saw the ardor and arduousness of individual expression. The cosmopolitan saw pride.

Eliot’s address to the Shakespeare Association in 1927 on “Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca” was informed by John W. Cunliffe’s *Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cunliffe 1893), but its claims were unmistakably his and characteristically contrarian. Proposing a “Shakespeare under the influence of the stoicism of Seneca” and wishing “merely to disinfect the Senecan Shakespeare before he appears,” Eliot drives quickly to what for him is the quintessential literary expression of Stoicism, both in ancient and modern times: “the attitude of self-dramatization assumed ... at the moment of tragic intensity” (Eliot 1950: 109–10). His main example of this “attitude” in Shakespeare is Othello’s final speech in *Othello* 5.2.338–56, where Othello ends a sentence and his life with, “And smote him – thus” (“Oh bloody period!” exclaims the observant Lodovico; 5.2.557). Othello, says Eliot, “in making this speech is *cheering himself up*” (Eliot 1950: 111). Shakespeare’s Coriolanus, Mark Antony, and even Hamlet, who “dies fairly well pleased with himself” (Eliot 1950: 113), are also mentioned in due course, and Eliot associates all of them with the sentiment, quoted from George Chapman’s *Revenge of Bussy d’Ambois* (1613), that a man should “join himself with th’ Universe / In his main sway, and make (in all things fit) / One with that All, and go on round as it” (4.1.139–41, in Chapman 1910: 122). Thus Clermont d’Ambois eloquently expresses the Stoic injunction to live in accordance with nature, well before his own rather quiet suicide. Eliot, however, insists that living in accordance with nature is always a selfish compensation for not being able to live in some “better” way: “A man does not join himself with the Universe so long as he has anything else to join himself with; men who could take part in the life of a thriving Greek city-state had something better to join themselves to; and Christians have had something better. Stoicism is the refuge for the individual in an indifferent or hostile world too big for him; it is the permanent substratum of a number of versions of cheering oneself up” (Eliot 1950: 112).

In Eliot’s judgment one cheers oneself up out of pride, and pride is what really interests him about Stoicism. “The Senecan attitude of Pride,” “this individualism, this vice of Pride,” “the self-consciousness and self-dramatization of the Shakespearean hero” that “seems to mark a stage, even if not a very agreeable one, in human history, or progress, or deterioration, or change”: for Eliot these things are bigger than Seneca and bigger even than Shakespeare (Eliot 1950: 112, 119). Of course a Christian bias can be heard in his insistence that the “human weakness” shown by Othello is a “universal human weakness,” in the claim that “Christians have had something better,” and in his long paragraph on Dante, who is said to

have been fortunate to live at a time when “thought was orderly and strong and beautiful” (Eliot 1950: 110, 116). It is interesting that Eliot refers to Nietzsche’s “late variant” of Stoicism – “there is not much difference between identifying oneself with the Universe and identifying the Universe with oneself” (Eliot 1950: 119–20) – for his critique is itself a late variant of the long tradition of anti-Stoicism that reaches back to the fourteenth book of Augustine’s *De civitate Dei*. There the Stoics are linked with the flesh, the Devil, and the special impiety that comes from living in the earthly city but pretending not to be touched by the dreadful emotions with which that city is, by divine command, continually convulsed. Stoics “seem to control ... those emotions” and “are so proud and elated in their impiety that ... their haughtiness increases even as their pain diminishes.” They exhibit, says Augustine, “a vanity as monstrous as it is rare”; and while failing to gain “true tranquility” they “suffer an entire loss of their humanity” (*De civ. D.* 14.9, in Augustine 1998: 602). Christopher Brooke’s recent book, *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau* (2012), makes it clear that when Stoicism re-emerged in the early modern period it did so by defining itself, one way or another, in relation to persistent Augustinian attacks. And one cannot study Stoicism in Shakespeare without encountering the same Augustinian tradition carried on by Eliot and others.<sup>3</sup>

Eliot’s famous critique was followed by two tendencies in scholarship. One of these, which I cannot help but think was sometimes driven by a desire to protect Shakespeare from that critique, was to deny the importance of Stoicism and Seneca for Shakespeare and Elizabethan drama generally in the name of native dramatic traditions, other classical influences most notably Ovid, and methodological rigor (Baker 1965 [1939]: 30–41, 107–53; Hunter 1978: 159–73, 174–213). The other was to assert that although Stoicism is actually present in many plays, the best ones feature Stoic characters that are judged harshly from better points of view. For example Marvin L. Vawter, in a series of frequently cited essays on *Julius Caesar* published in the 1970s, sets Shakespeare’s Brutus, who is said to suffer from various Stoic misunderstandings, against Shakespeare’s Cicero, whose presence suggests to Vawter that the playwright was aware of the criticisms of the Stoics made in Cicero’s *De finibus* and *De divinatione*. “Shakespeare would have identified Brutus not merely as a Stoic,” writes Vawter, but “as a Stoic Wise Man who ... ironically demonstrates the insufficiency of virtue-reason; indeed, Brutus is a dramatic illustration of the hollowness, presumption, and mortal sickness inherent in the secular concept of virtue-reason’s sufficiency” (Vawter 1974: 177). Such accusations have more to do with Augustine than they do with Shakespeare or Cicero. The skeptical Cicero of *Julius Caesar* is presented too fragmentarily by Shakespeare and too skeptically to provide the necessary moral center for the kind of wholesale repudiation of Stoicism imagined by Vawter. And if Cicero’s handling of dialogue in his philosophical works matters here, then it should be noticed that he comes to the Stoics’ defense in his own voice in *De finibus* 5.77–86, near the end of that work.<sup>4</sup>

It has only been in the last twenty-five years that a consensus has emerged allowing Stoicism both to be present in the best Renaissance drama and to be worth investigating on its own terms. Gordon Braden’s *Renaissance Drama and the Senecan Tradition: Anger’s Privilege* (1985) signaled a turning point of sorts, for although he takes “cues” from Eliot he renames the willfulness derided by Eliot and others “a style of autarkic selfhood” and gives that bombastic “style” due respect within European dramatic history (Braden 1985: 2, 69). The Stoical Kent says in *King Lear* that “anger hath a privilege” (2.2.70). Braden privileges anger by observing that it can “be the form of our deepest involvement in the scheme of things” (Braden 1985: 2). For Braden Stoics do not eliminate their anger: they mediate it in ways that express those involvements. This leads to probing discussions of Seneca’s Hercules, Thomas Kyd’s



Hieronimo, Pierre de Corneille's *Médée*, and several other uncompromising monomaniacs. But the book's final section is devoted to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Braden, to his credit, allows Stoicism to *change* as it comes into contact with Shakespeare's characters. An early stage in *Hamlet*'s engagement with Stoicism is indicated by his praise of Horatio for being "As one in suffering all that suffers nothing, / A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards / Hast ta'en with equal thanks" (3.2.66–8). "Give me that man," *Hamlet* says with a passion bordering on irony, "That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him / In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart" (3.2.71–3). Then he catches himself – "Something too much of this" (3.2.74) – and tells Horatio of his plans for the mousetrap. In the end, Braden argues, *Hamlet* achieves "a Stoicism Christianized by an unclassically thorough humility before a greater power" (Braden 1985: 221). Closer to Montaigne than Seneca, "*Hamlet*'s new apathy is not a proud independence from the contingency of events, but a surrender to the promptings and wisdom of occasion" (Braden 1985: 222). *Hamlet*'s final Stoicism is thus real for Braden although greatly different from Stoicism's ancient origins, and his revenge is real, too, accomplished because it is spontaneous and imperfect.

The humble Stoicism that *Hamlet* achieves in the end suggests something about Shakespeare's tragedies that has not been recognized enough: that they can turn on Stoic themes that have nothing necessarily to do with "autarkic selfhood" and suicidal rage but that lead to tragedy nonetheless. Two scholars stand out here: John M. Wallace, the great historical critic of seventeenth-century literature whose work on Senecan ethics in Shakespeare was sadly cut short in 1993, and Geoffrey Miles, whose splendid book, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* (1996), approaches Stoic constancy (*homologia*) from both Senecan and Ciceronian points of view. Miles shows that one encounters constancy in Shakespeare not only as steadfastness – the rock-hard, godlike attitude that pushes the Senecan hero towards violence to others and himself – but also as consistency, the sociable if also quite problematic kind of constancy recommended by Cicero in *De officiis* 1.93–151. The word that Cicero uses for this, *decorum*, is at home in discussions of poetry and drama, and Cicero turns specifically to poets in *De officiis* 1.97–8 and actors in 1.114 to explain the slippery concept. "Moral decorum," writes Miles, "means the consistent playing of one's proper role" (Miles 1996: 32).

"Proper," however, is complex here. Miles shows that *decorum* entails for Cicero the integration of three basic kinds of role-playing: "the consistent playing of a part appropriate to human nature, one's personal character, and one's social role" (Miles 1996: 13). Managing to do all three seems like a difficult prospect even in Cicero's pleasant discussion. It becomes the stuff of tragedy in Shakespeare. "The Romans of *Julius Caesar* are indeed 'Roman actors,'" writes Miles, "preoccupied with playing their roles with decorum and 'formal constancy,' but tending to neglect Cicero's insistence on choosing the most appropriate roles" for themselves given their personal characters. "Coriolanus," he continues, "is grimly determined to be true to his own nature, but finally runs devastatingly into the conflict" between that nature and the stronger claims of human or "universal" nature (Miles 1996: 37). Antony is not Stoic in *Antony and Cleopatra*, but Cleopatra combines "emotionalism, sensuality, frivolity, capriciousness," and "changeableness" in a tragic decorum involving "a new Stoic dignity and resolution" (Miles 1996: 187). Approaches like Miles's – ones cognizant of Stoicism as offering complex problems rather than univocal doctrine – have led to the best work on Stoicism, Shakespeare, and Renaissance drama over the last several years.

Wallace's essays on *Timon of Athens* and *Coriolanus* constitute a smaller body of work than Miles's book, but they are extremely valuable as models for taking Stoicism seriously and for taking Shakespeare seriously as a philosopher. In the first essay Wallace argues that "book and play" – Seneca's *De beneficiis* and *Timon of Athens* – "square off against each other, like *Timon*

and Apemantus, and the outcome of the philosophical quarrel between them is left in doubt.” The play shows that “natural obligations derived from mutual benefits could never be the basis for a healthy society because mankind is ineradicably greedy and hypocritical, and the effort to pretend that he is not must lead to disgust and misanthropy.” And yet *De beneficiis* “cannot be written off as social philosophy” if Timon – first its great exemplar and then “its chief denunciator” – fails to follow Seneca’s rules (Wallace 1986: 355).<sup>5</sup> In the end Seneca is granted “the game, set, and match” when Alcibiades returns to Athens, his anger strangely abated, and mandates a return to a state of affairs that seems to include the hope that Athenian society will hold together by means of beneficial exchange (Wallace 1986: 361). The return to a way of life that has just been shown to be unworkable may be the mark of a particularly Stoic kind of early modern tragedy. In *Timon of Athens*, *Coriolanus*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet* Shakespeare makes a theme of the fact that there is no alternative. “Let’s make the best of it,” says the Second Lord near the end of *Coriolanus* (5.6.146). “Making the best of it,” writes Wallace in the essay on *Coriolanus*, “like making the best of a bad job, or muddling through, is what we do when we have no clear sense of direction, no obvious alternatives to choose from, and no foregone conclusions” (Wallace 1993: 477). It helps to be Stoic when Stoicism fails. As for *Timon of Athens*, Wallace calls it “a great blow to cherished Elizabethan conceptions, but it concludes, for want of anything better, by leaving them still in place, and it was not until forty years later that the genius of Hobbes was to create a model of political society founded on the bedrock of human passions which had wrecked Timon’s idealism” (Wallace 1986: 362). Until contractual society arrived a beneficial one would have to do: “Shakespeare could see the attractiveness of the Senecan society and all its weaknesses, and tragedy is born of the tension between a wish to make it work, a wish to get out of it, and the realization that one can do neither” (Wallace 1986: 362–3). Thus tragedy was drawn from a philosophy that took one of its goals to be, as Seneca puts it in *De beneficiis* 1.15.2, the establishment of “the fellowship of the whole human race.”

Wallace’s suggestions regarding the importance of Stoicism in what he came to refer to as “the heroic society” (Wallace 1980) and the bewilderment that could go along with even its healthiest prescriptions have not been followed up as much they might. I have made a modest contribution by dealing with clemency, the supreme benefit, in some work on English literary culture of the 1640s and 1650s (Shifflett 2003) and later seventeenth-century drama (Shifflett 1998: 75–106). Clemency “is in the truest sense self-control” for a person “in a position of unlimited power,” writes Seneca in *De clementia* (1.11.2). This treatise, which Seneca addressed to Nero, has been called by its foremost expert “one of the foundational texts for the Renaissance ‘Mirror of Princes’ genre” (Braund 2009: 78). In the chapter on clemency in *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* (1589) Lipsius calls clemency “the moon of empires,” a “goddess ... mild and gracious, who doth mollify and temper matters, taketh away the hurtful, raiseth up them that fall, and runneth to preserve those that throw themselves headlong into danger” (Lipsius 1594: 30). *De clementia* continued to be influential well into the seventeenth century. A thorough study of this topic in English literature might begin with Henry Bullingbrook’s assumption, as “a god on earth” (5.3.136), of the divine prerogative of forgiveness lost by King Richard in the *chorismos* of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*. It might then work through the instrumentalization of clemency in 1–2 *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. Clemency is not exposed by Shakespeare as “old-fashioned, unworkable nonsense,” as Wallace has said of benefits in general (Wallace 1986: 362). Instead its value is shown to be dependent on the people’s willingness – in a kind of happy modification of the Hobbesian formula before the fact – to authorize the sovereign’s inscrutable mercy. If Shakespeare’s history plays are concerned, ultimately, with the collapse of divinely sanctioned authority and the political

means by which authority can be re-established, then clemency, the remediation of anger, the general exchange of benefits and other “cherished Elizabethan notions” whose philosophical bases lay in Stoicism must be important parts of the story.

Before turning to Croll and the fortunes of Stoic prose style it should be acknowledged that this chapter is passing over numerous writers who deserve greater attention, as well as the work of some fine scholars who have given their subjects the attention they deserve. Considered only in terms of the translation of Stoic texts, one is dealing with a period that runs from the heyday of Henry VIII and black-letter translations of Cicero’s *De officiis* (1534) and *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (1539) to the later years of Charles II and Sir Roger L’Estrange’s smooth paraphrases “by way of abstract” of Seneca’s *De beneficiis* and other prose works under the title of *Seneca’s Morals* (1678, with reprintings into the early nineteenth century). High points in that 150-year span include the translations of Epictetus by James Sandford (1567, quoted above) and by John Healey (1610), Arthur Golding’s translation of *De beneficiis* (1578), Sir John Stradling’s translation of Lipsius’s *De constantia* in 1595, the translation of Guillaume du Vair’s influential reaction to Epictetus, *La Philosophie morale des Stoiques*, by Thomas James in 1598, Thomas Lodge’s comprehensive translation of Seneca’s prose works (1614, enlarged in 1620), Thomas May’s translation of Lucan’s *Pharsalia* in pentameter couplets (1627), and the surprising translations – surprising because they are in verse – of *De clementia* by an anonymous poet (1653) and *De constantia* by Richard Goodridge (1654). To name these works is only to scratch the surface.

The political uses to which Stoicism was put during the period, whether one is thinking only of translations or also of its presences in plays, poems, and essays, would be even harder to cover adequately. At least that is a conclusion to be drawn from scholarship on the subject. My own feeling is that this scholarship has been so concerned with detailing political contexts that neither Stoicism nor literary history has always been well served. When a writer like John Milton strikes a heroic Stoic pose as he does in the *Defensio Secunda* (1654), or when his Son of God both celebrates and denigrates Stoicism as he does in *Paradise Regain’d* (1671), then it is likely to be important for literary and philosophical history. But as political rhetoric Stoicism was itself one of the *adiaphora*, a thing indifferent, and it could serve nearly any purpose which writers wanted it to serve. Reid Barbour, one of the sharpest commentators on the politics of Stoicism and Epicureanism in the Jacobean and Caroline periods, has observed “that early Stuart culture is diacritically obsessed with the Stoics and Epicureans, apart from and in relation to each other,” and that they “are bifurcated in order to be reduced or caricatured, lumped together in order to be vilified or embraced, treated piecemeal with an eye to a single issue, and particularized with an eye to scholarly care but also in order to show how indecisive the philosophy is” with respect to an issue (Barbour 1998: 2, 12). Sorting out these matters is of primary importance to Barbour and many other scholars. It is less important to me, although I have done my part in the past to explain the political meanings of Stoicism in seventeenth-century English literature (Shifflett 1998). In any case there is reason to think that when some early modern writers tried to be Stoic they were actually trying to be Stoic, regardless of their ideological motives. One stays within such literature, so to speak, with the conviction that it is important that Stoicism was being continued in it and that literature is a field in which philosophy and history converge.

Croll’s work on what he eventually came to term “baroque” prose style has now reached its 100th anniversary. In the landmark essay on Lipsius that appeared in 1914 in *Revue du Seizième Siècle* he places “la philosophie stoïcienne, avec sa théorie de la supériorité de l’esprit sur les circonstances” at the center of a constellation of writers ranging from Michel de Montaigne in France to John Donne in England to Francisco de Quevedo and Balthazar

Gracian in Spain (Croll 1966: 13). In another seminal essay he calls the period running from 1575 to 1675 “the Silver Age of modern literature” and remarks that “we shall not understand the seventeenth century” until we see that during it Lucan was more influential than Virgil, that “Seneca was more loved and much more effectively imitated ... than Cicero had been in previous generations,” that Tacitus “almost completely displaced Livy as the model of historical writing,” and that Martial, Juvenal, Persius, and Tertullian were more often preferred as models than were Catullus, Horace, and Augustine (Croll 1966: 96–7). The common denominator for most of the writers in Croll’s vision – ancient and early modern – is Stoicism. In one memorable passage he writes of the Stoics as seeking “a kind of truth” that “is moral and inward”: “It was a reality not visible to the naked eye, but veiled from common observation; hidden in a shrine toward which one might win his way, through a jostling, noisy mob of illusory appearances, by a series of partial initiations.” But what Stoic writers seek and what they write about are not, for Croll, quite the same things: what they wish to “depict” in their writing is not “truth” or “reality” but “the effort of the athletic and disciplined mind in its progress toward the unattainable goal” (Croll 1966: 85–6). This entailed “a highly imaginative portrayal of their relations with truth,” a style that “portrays the process of acquiring the truth rather than the secure possession of it,” and one “wrought upon with subtle art to reveal the secret experiences of arduous and solitary minds” (Croll 1966: 86, 89, 95).

There is insufficient space here to give fully representative examples of Croll’s basic categories of style, the “curt” style and the “loose” style. The first – with periods composed of extremely short members asymmetrical in length and form and lacking the normal syntactic connectives – suggests thought as isolated epiphany. It is associated especially with Seneca’s *Epistulae morales*. The second – with periods that exploit their numerous syntactic connectives for asymmetrical and logically unexpected ends – suggests thought as a disorderly train.<sup>6</sup> Although I shall attempt some analysis along these lines when discussing Cornwallis’ prose below, it must suffice to point to Jonas A. Barish’s fine study, *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy* (1960), as offering confirmation of Croll’s claims as well as important extensions of them. Barish shows that Jonson uses Senecan style *objectively* to represent human character in his plays and, for that matter, in prose representing his own thought. Jonson “produced a style more Senecan than Seneca’s, insofar as Senecanism implied rebellion against rhetorical constraint.” There is thus what Barish calls “a mild paradox” in Jonson’s famous craftsmanship, for “he worked as hard to roughen and irregularize his prose as others did to polish and regularize” (Barish 1960: 66). Whether “curt” or “loose” – the latter usually suggests “libertine” thinking in other writers – Jonson’s style “creates an impression of granitic strength: the participation of the reader or listener becomes an exercise in rock-climbing over the jagged, twisted, craggy terrain of the syntax” (Barish 1960: 77). Jonson professes the central values of humanism, but his style betrays instead the anxious progress of the Stoic *proficiens*. In Jonson “the tensions remain buried,” but “no one has ever doubted their existence” (Barish 1960: 87).

Although the importance of Seneca in seventeenth-century English literary culture has sometimes been questioned, Croll’s arguments have been generally accepted.<sup>7</sup> They were basic to Barish’s work as well as to Wesley Trimpi’s *Ben Jonson’s Poems* (Trimpi 1962), which vindicated the “plain style” of Jonson’s lyric poetry in Senecan and Lipsian terms. More recently – channeled through Trimpi and others – those arguments have informed the work of Lorna Hutson on Neostoic “virility” and “the structure and stylistics of desire between men” in Jonson’s plays (Hutson 2004: 1077). But here, too, there is reason to think that more could be done, that this tradition of a 100 years need not be spent. If the slowdown is symptomatic of the general turn from stylistic and formal topics in Renaissance studies to

historical ones since the early 1980s, then it should be reiterated that for Lipsius and others the imitation of Seneca's style entailed thinking of "literary imitation as a problem with historical and political ramifications, and as part of an effort to make a 'disciplined, strong, and truly virile' response" to one's environment (Shifflett 1998: 26). Stoic style might even involve, for those writers who were really committed to it, a kind of *imitatio* degree zero that had no room for conventional rhetoric and seemed to challenge established religious and political values by somehow producing its own values from within.

An example of such a stylist is Sir William Cornwallis (1579–1614).<sup>8</sup> He is one of the surprisingly small number of writers positively identified as Stoic by Gilles D. Monsarrat in *Light from the Porch: Stoicism and English Renaissance Literature* (Monsarrat 1984: 109–17), a book that has struck most of its readers as unusually demanding when it comes to what counts as Stoicism. And Cornwallis has attracted the attention of Miles for what he says about practicing Stoic constancy in the face of popular opinion and for his apparent interest in Shakespeare's plays (Miles 1996: 77–9). But neither Miles nor Monsarrat, nor J. H. M. Salmon, for whom Cornwallis is a representative of "English malcontents who devised their own blend of Senecan and Tacitean influence under the pressure of plots, rivalries and disappointments in the first decade of the seventeenth century" (Salmon 1989: 224), have taken him seriously enough as a writer or dealt sufficiently with the thematic and structural roles that reading and writing play throughout his texts.<sup>9</sup> The literate Stoic self, as Croll might well have said, is what Cornwallis is most concerned to depict.

One thing that Cornwallis is not much concerned to depict is malcontentedness, no matter how many disappointments he may have suffered as a result of his service to the traitorous Earl of Essex. Not even "The Praise of King Richard the Third," which Salmon refers to as "one of his boldest literary ventures" and "an attempt to rehabilitate Richard III, published anonymously" (Salmon 1989: 214), is clearly anything more than a literary game. It is one of the *Essayes of Certaine Paradoxes* (Cornwallis 1616), and in that book Cornwallis also praises syphilis and nothing – nothing because, well, "nothing is more precious than gold" (F4v).<sup>10</sup> His praise of Richard involves more than mere wordplay, but one must still reckon with the sentence centered above its "finis": "Yet for all this know, I hold this but a paradox" (E3r). In fact the final paradox of the *Certaine Paradoxes*, "That It Is Good to Be in Debt," although it may seem particularly implausible coming from a chronically insolvent father of eleven, is the most plausible of the paradoxes from a Stoic point of view. Cornwallis would "rectify [our] judgment in a paradox ... discussed and canvassed among the Stoics in Zeno's porch ... that it is better for a man to live in debt, than otherwise" (G2v). The paradox of debt arises from some of the same basic convictions about the physical universe that motivate the happy doctrine of benefits. "The elements," Cornwallis writes, "are linked together by a league of association, and by their symbolizing qualities, do barter and truck, borrow and lend one to another, as being the burse and royal-exchange of nature: they are by this traffic and intercourse, the very life and nourishment of all sublunary bodies" (G4r).<sup>11</sup> It is possible that a life of debt – with eleven children and a wife with whom he evidently felt a deep bond of nature – was in fact "good" for him.

The literary paradox carried Stoic associations for Renaissance readers. This was due in part to the currency of Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum* and more broadly to the genre's provocative insistence that the significance of things depends entirely on how we think and speak of them. Indeed the paradox is at home in a world of *adiaphora*, things that for the Stoic "acquire value only in relation to an inner disposition or intention" on the part of the user (Fish 1983: 169).<sup>12</sup> "After all," writes Rosalie Colie of one of Du Vair's surprising formulations in *La Philosophie morale des Stoiques*, "when the world is reduced to a 'thing indifferent,' when

a man's senses and reason must measure the whole world, when values are turned into value judgments," then such paradoxes "are inevitable" (Colie 1966: 402). Cornwallis is a connoisseur of things indifferent in his impressive *Essayes* (Cornwallis 1600–1). "We are all bees, or spiders, converting things indifferent to a particular quality," he writes in "Of Suspicion" (D2v). The range of things indifferent is vast – "me thinks there is great indifference" (D3v) – and what we make of them is up to us: "thus is the making things good, or ill, equally in our choice, as the being good, or ill" (D2v). In "Of the Observation and Use of Things," an essay that reads in places like a rough draft for Milton's *Areopagitica*, Cornwallis writes that "there is not that thing upon the earth, that well examined, yields not something worthy of knowledge" (I6v). Good and evil grow up together: "for things are a kin to one another, they come all out of one fountain, and the knowing one, brings you acquainted with another, and so to others" (I6v–I7r). Books, too, are things indifferent for Cornwallis, and so "all kind of books are profitable" – although, as he jokes here, their profitability depends on one's situation: "pamphlets, and lying stories, and news, and two-penny poets I would know them, but beware of being familiar with them: my custom is to read these, and presently to make use of them, for they lie in my privy, and when I come thither, and have occasion to employ it, I read them, half a side at once is my ordinary, which when I have read, I use in that kind, that waste paper is most subject to, but to a cleaner profit" (I7r).

Of course it is not only that things indifferent are not essentially bad. They are not essentially good either, which means that continual sorting is necessary. One or the other of these qualifications is always driving "Of Essays and Books," a long, Montaignesque essay that begins with the opinion that Montaigne's writings are not, unlike his own, "rightly termed essays" because "they are strong, and able to endure the sharpest trial" (Gg8v). "I think well of these books named," he writes near the end of the essay, "because they teach me how to manage myself"; but "where any of them grow subtle, or intend high matters, I give my memory leave to lose them" (Ii8r). Cornwallis's most striking application of the doctrine of things indifferent comes in the essay "Of Alehouses." "Driven by night" to seek shelter and "without any company but ink and paper" – ink and paper that he uses, he says, "instead of talking to myself" – Cornwallis then looks about the microcosmic alehouse (M5v–M6r). The immediate impression is one of a general, leveling hypocrisy: "not a post, nor a painted cloth in the house, but cries out, *Fear God*, and yet the parson of the town scarce keeps this instruction" (M6r). Vices are our common coin, and they are all of the same value: "a drunken cobbler and a mere hawking gentleman rank equally" because "both end their pursuits with pleasing their senses"; "courting a mistress and buying of a whore are somewhat like" because "the end of both is luxury" (M6v). A few such examples are sufficient for Cornwallis, who claims to have "been ... seeking differences" at the alehouse, to conclude that human beings are themselves things indifferent: "For men, titles and clothes, not their lives, and actions help me: so were they all naked, and banished from the heralds' books, they are without any evidence of pre-eminence, and their souls cannot defend them from community" (M6v–M7r).

The first words of "Of Alehouses" are "I write this in an alehouse" (M5v). The spell of intimacy is never broken even though, somewhat paradoxically, the essay is directed toward the idea of "community." "Of the Observation and Use of Things" begins briskly with news that "I come from discoursing with a husbandman, an excellent stiff slave, without observation, respect, or civility, but not without a great deal of wit" (I6r). "My custom is about this time of day to sleep," he writes at the beginning of "Of Sleep," and so he cannot help but write in a "drowsy style" (L1r). Other essays that begin in more orderly ways may be fitful in the middle (e.g. "Of Essays and Books," in which Cornwallis corrects a digression midway

through the proceedings with an interjectional “Again of books” [Ii6r]) or come to a final screeching halt (e.g. “Of Resolution,” which ends with Cicero “thrusting his neck out of his coach, to meet the sword of the executioner” [B8r]). Like Croll’s more famous Stoic writers, Cornwallis has harsh words for Cicero’s style (Ee5v–Ee6r) and for “rhetoric’s cookery,” which he calls “the vomit of a pedant” (Ii5v). He demonstrates his own characteristic stylistic choice – a combination of curtness and looseness – when criticizing the modern Ciceronian in “Of Discourse”: “There is another creature that weighs every word, and will be sure to turn the verb behind, affects elegancy, and to be thought learned: this fellow is formal, he robs himself of his commendations, with this premeditated course” (G4v). Cornwallis is guilty of no such “elegancy” here or anywhere. Sometimes he seems to “interpret the revolt against rhetoric as a dispensation for negligence,” observes Roger E. Bennett, the only scholar who can be said to have been an expert on his writings. “Yet sometimes what appears to be the result of carelessness is deliberate. He often breaks a period to arrest attention, and a good deal of his ruggedness and uncouthness is cultivated because he deemed it appropriate to his Stoic thought” (Bennett 1933: 1088). All of the effects mentioned above – situatedness, extemporaneity, disorderliness – as well as contempt for oratorical rhetoric are encouraged by Seneca in the *Epistulae morales*, which no less an authority than Sir Francis Bacon thought were “but essays, that is, dispersed meditations, though conveyed in the form of epistles” (Bacon 1985: 239).<sup>13</sup>

Seneca is present throughout the *Essays*. “In the end I found myself,” writes Cornwallis in “Of Resolution,” and he gives the credit “especially to Seneca and Plato” (B2r). He has “been counseled by Plato and Seneca for philosophy” during his “vehemently bookish” career (N7v). Seneca’s style is to Cicero’s style as “sit[ting] in council” is to danc[ing] a jig” (Ee6r). Seneca’s “morality is easy to be understood and easily digested to the nourishment of virtue” (Hh3r). Of all the moralists mentioned in “Of Essays and Books,” he thinks “Seneca of morality is the best” (Ii6v). In what amounts to a justification of his devotion to Seneca, Plato, and only a few other writers, Cornwallis claims to be “of Seneca’s mind concerning this variety of books” – meaning that he agrees with Seneca’s comparison in *Epistulae morales* 2.2 of “an unsettled reader, to a traveler, that hath many hosts, and few friends” (Ii7v–Ii8r). In the course of praising “the liquor of observation” – it “is the whole world distilled,” “good for the whole world, for all things troubling either mind, or body” – he writes: “I know none better at this, than ... Seneca, who in his epistles (the work of all he wrought in most estimation with me) makes light observations continually beget serious discourse” (Kk7r). “Me thinks” – this is a topic addressed by Jaques in the Forest of Arden – “the right understander of example uses the world like a stage, men like comedians, for though he makes least account of a stolen marriage, of an amorous young man, of a father as much in love with his money, as his son with a wench: of a huffing braggart, and a gouty *leno*; yet even from these he fetches some implements of his building” (Kk7r–v).

Thus Cornwallis found in the *Epistulae morales* several things: Stoic wisdom, a model prose style, and a great deal of intoxicating “observation” on the human theater. And perhaps most importantly he encountered Stoicism in the form of epistolary correspondence. Bacon was wise to link Seneca’s letters with the early modern essay, but he underestimated the importance of “the form of epistles.” Correspondence is itself sometimes a topic in the *Epistulae morales* and it is nearly always an implicit concern. Most of the letters from the second through the twenty-ninth close with the offering of a gift or payment to the student Lucilius (a *munus*, *munusculo*, *mercedula*, *lucellum*, *stips*, or *debitum*) in the form of an apt quotation from a fellow Stoic or, more frequently, from Epicurus, whom Seneca reads not as a *transfuga* but as an *explorator* (Ep. 2.5). Seneca indicates in the thirty-third letter that he has abandoned the

practice of sententious gift-giving, but of course the letters themselves may be thought of as payments. At one point he tells Lucilius, who wants more letters from him, that a comparison of “accounts” will show that the student is not “on the credit side” (*Ep.* 118.1).<sup>14</sup> I would suggest that Cornwallis imitates Seneca best by assuming the role of Lucilius, Seneca’s intellectual debtor. He teaches the reader by writing as a student. Seneca and Plato “oftentimes make me think well,” he writes in “Of Resolution,” but they “seldom make me do well” (B2r). Having criticized in that essay “the strange alterations of men upon slight occasions, at the receipt of a letter, yea, before the reading, at a message, at news” (B4r), his attempts at wisdom (“Banish these gross perturbations, all noble spirits” [B4v]) reach a period in a characteristic admission of his own philosophical immaturity: “You are out of the way, if you think any other estate but your own capable of true honor: the poorer, the better: the stronger your enemy, the more worthy your conquest: vanquish your own sick wishes, and desires, and the chariot of triumph belongs more truly to you, than to Caesar. I write thus, I think thus, and I hope to do thus: but that blessed time is not yet come” (B5v–B6r). Even when Cornwallis gives the reader advice he gives it as one who is trying – and sometimes failing – to follow it himself.

“Writing is the draught of reading,” Cornwallis observes in “Of Fame,” “and by this I have disburdened my head, and taken account of my profiting” (N7v). At least he is honest. Again and again Cornwallis owns up to the criticism that his only modern editor, Don Cameron Allen, leveled at him nearly seventy years ago: “His habit of quoting from adjacent pages of the same book gives the impression that he was reading as he wrote” (Cornwallis 1946: xiii). Reading as he writes is Cornwallis’ version of the epistolary exchange represented in the *Epistulae morales*, which itself is an expression of the balanced exchange of reading and writing that Seneca identifies with physical and psychological health. “We ought not to confine ourselves either to writing or to reading,” Seneca writes in the famous eighty-fourth letter on literary imitation; “the one, continuous writing, will cast a gloom over our strength, and exhaust it; the other will make our strength flabby and watery. It is better to have recourse to them alternately, and to blend one with the other, so that the fruits of one’s reading may be reduced to concrete form by the pen” (*Ep.* 84.2). Seneca goes on to describe the proper inclusion of others’ texts in one’s own with several fascinating metaphors of complex wholeness.<sup>15</sup> Cornwallis is content, however, to think of his “manner of writing” as “befitting undigested motions” (Gg8v). Thus does he make himself like the Stoic elements mentioned in his paradox of debt – elements that “by their symbolizing qualities, do barter and truck, borrow and lend one to another.” It is fitting that the closest thing we have to a picture of Cornwallis – the title page of a posthumous edition of the *Essayes* – is of two men sitting at desks on opposite sides of columns under symmetrical arches (Cornwallis 1632). One is reading, the other writing. Somewhere between them is the self that he found.

Throughout early modern Stoic literary tradition there is a sense that one’s work is not yet done, that there are more roles to be played in the stage-like world. I began this chapter by suggesting that Shakespeare’s Jaques finds “strong medicine” for his troubles in Stoicism. He tells himself and anyone who will listen to him that life is a series of roles. Somewhat like Cornwallis, who commits himself to the roles of reader and writer, the role that Jaques plays in *As You Like It* is comprised of observation and pronouncement on the human condition. In the final scene it becomes clear that his work will continue with Duke Frederick. Is it true, he asks with real interest, that Frederick “hath put on a religious life, / And thrown into neglect the pompous court?” (5.4.181–2). Jaques is bound for “these convertites” from whom he expects “much matter to be learned and heard” (5.4.184–5). Shakespeare’s Horatio enters *Hamlet* as a student with presumptions of sagacity and he is praised as a Stoic by his



troubled friend. But in the end the inclination of this “antique Roman” (5.2.341) to kill himself is corrected by that friend, who sends him on an open-ended career of admonitory storytelling. Authors, too, while professing ancient wisdom, work as Jonson does “to roughen and irregularize.” Whether the concern is improving one’s own virtue or benefiting the whole human race, arduous work is necessary and Stoic writing is more about the work itself than the product. One hopes for a noble end but “that blessed time,” as Cornwallis puts it, “is not yet come.”

## Notes

- 1 Quotations from Shakespeare’s plays are cited parenthetically by act, scene, and line numbers and are drawn from Shakespeare 1997. This edition modernizes spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. I take similar liberties when quoting other early modern texts.
- 2 See Curtius 1953: 138–44 and Bradford 1976.
- 3 On Eliot’s dealings with Shakespeare in “Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca” and throughout his writings see Harding 2012.
- 4 For ancient authors I use the texts and translations in the Loeb Classical Library editions and cite them by traditional division numbers.
- 5 For a brief account of the medieval and early modern “afterlife” of *De beneficiis* see Griffin 2013: 164–8.
- 6 The “curt” and “loose” styles are explained most clearly in “The Baroque Style in Prose” (Croll 1966: 207–33).
- 7 Miner 1970 argued on the basis of the *Short-Title Catalogues* that Seneca was less important than Cicero throughout the seventeenth century, although *De officiis* made him unwilling to question the importance of Stoicism itself.
- 8 For a short account of Cornwallis’s life and works see Cornwallis 1946: ix–xviii.
- 9 Salmon distinguishes between the “the English experience” of Neostoicism and the “rational statecraft” and “prudential participation of the citizen as the servant of the absolutist state” associated with Gerhard Oestreich’s now largely discredited interpretation of Lipsius (Salmon 1989: 224).
- 10 When quoting Cornwallis I modernize spelling and capitalization but preserve his punctuation.
- 11 On the Stoic elements see Zeller 1892: 194–209 and, on Lipsius’s interpretation of Stoic physical theory generally, Saunders 1955: 117–217.
- 12 On religious and political implications of the doctrine of things indifferent in early modern England see Kahn 1994: 135–48, 171–84.
- 13 No doubt Cornwallis was also inspired by Montaigne, whose example provided a “solution” to the “problem in etiquette” that he faced as a gentleman who wished to add to his family’s honor by writing (Bennett 1933: 1084). Montaigne is for Cornwallis a “noble French knight” and is “most excellent” for the “profitable recreation” that he offers (H3v).
- 14 On the educational “drama” of the *Epistulae morales* see Schafer 2011.
- 15 See Greene 1982: 73–6.

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## **PART III**

# Early modern Europe

# MEDICINE OF THE MIND IN EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY

*Guido Giglioni*

## **Introduction: a Baconian legacy**

In his *Tusculanae disputationes* (*Tusculan Disputations*, 45 BCE), Cicero associated the notion of philosophy as a therapy of the mind (*medicina animi*) with the Stoics, “especially Chrysippus.” In doing so, Chrysippus had compared mental health (*sanitas animi*) – perhaps with too much emphasis (*nimum operae*), in Cicero’s opinion – to the sound condition of the body (4.23). In his *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* (*On the opinions of Hippocrates and Plato*), written between 162 and 176, Galen (129–216?), too, attributed the analogy of mental and physical health to Chrysippus (5.22). Francis Bacon (1561–1626), who was well acquainted with these Ciceronian and Galenic loci, reinterpreted the Stoic analogy in such a way that the medical element involved in the original metaphor shifted even more towards the literal referent: rather than being the healing subject, the mind was the object that needed to be healed. The remedy did not therefore lie in the individual exercise of the rational faculties, but in the outside world, the life of the body, a more balanced use of the senses and, finally, in engaging with the challenges of political reality. This meant that, in the Baconian treatment of the mind, Chrysippus gave way to Galen. Significantly, Galen had criticized Chrysippus and his followers because, unlike the physicians, the Stoics had failed to indicate in what ways the knowledge of the soul could find useful applications in the domains of moral and political philosophy (Galen 2012: 94). Here it should be pointed out that Bacon’s redefinition of the Stoic therapy was possible because, starting from the sixteenth century, a parallel movement of Galenic revival had accompanied the recovery of Stoic ideas. Indeed, a valuable source of information about the Stoic treatment of the emotions became available during the Renaissance precisely through the Latin translation of Galen’s *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*.<sup>1</sup>

The questioning of the Stoic approach had also to do with broader cultural issues. During the seventeenth century, a number of thinkers and physicians became increasingly convinced that the progress of technology and the possibility of prolonging the length of healthy lives would ensure a state of lasting happiness. They reached this conclusion not so much by looking at happiness as something depending on material acquisition and consumption, but because in their opinion the prolongation of life and the improvement of the physical well-being of mankind would create the material conditions necessary for the mind to attain the highest good. Bacon, who was a professional politician and a philosopher in his spare time, described

this achievement as the primary goal of philosophical inquiry in *De sapientia veterum* (The wisdom of the ancients), published in 1609:

concern for public affairs [*rerum civilium cura*] takes place in due order after the attempt to renew the mortal body has been assiduously made and in the end it failed [*post experimentum corporis mortalis restituendi sedulo tentatum et ad extremum frustratum*]. And the reason is that, when the unavoidable necessity of death [*mortis necessitas inevitabilis*] is placed before the eyes of human beings in a more manifest way, this encourages them to aspire to eternity through merits and the renown of one's own name.

(Bacon 1857–74: VI 648)

A recurrent theme in Bacon's philosophy is that knowledge of nature and virtuous behavior required time (not surprisingly, *mora*, "postponement," is one of the keywords of Bacon's philosophy). In the passage quoted from *De sapientia veterum*, Bacon characterized the endeavor to prolong mortal life indefinitely as the most important "experiment" ever tried by human beings. Its inevitable failure, however, had led them to concentrate all their efforts on finding ways to extend and preserve the life of the political body (*rerum civilium cura*), while connecting happiness to a surrogate of permanent life, that is, social recognition (*nominis fama*).<sup>2</sup>

This interplay of material permanence and mental stability – that is, of bodily and spiritual health, of physical and social self-preservation – was to become one of the dominant motifs of early modern philosophy. In the *Discours de la methode* (*Discourse on Method*), published in 1637, René Descartes (1596–1650) declared that health (*la conseruation de la santé*) was the "foundation of all other goods of this life." By re-enacting characteristically Galenic tropes, he went so far as to link the progress of the mind to a sound disposition of the body. Like Bacon (and with tones that remind us of parallel discussions taking place in the field of Galenic investigations – medical, anthropological and philological),<sup>3</sup> Descartes was confident that progress in technology would advance both knowledge and happiness:

for the mind itself depends so closely on the temperament and the arrangement of the organs of the body that, if there is the possibility of finding a way through which men can easily be made wiser and more skilful than they have been so far, I think that medicine is what one should look for.

(Descartes 1964–74: VI 62)

This aim had such a strong appeal in Descartes's mind that he decided to devote the rest of his life to "try[ing] to acquire some knowledge of nature so that one could draw rules for medicine that were more certain than the ones in use at present" (Descartes 1964–74: VI 62, 78).<sup>4</sup>

Reliance on medicine as a platform for both physical and mental soundness was one of the most significant developments in early modern philosophy. Owing to unavoidable issues of lingering medicalization and technocratic expertise, the program was also perceived as extremely ambiguous and questionable. In this specific juncture, medicine could be used as reality, model and metaphor, often at the same time, for medicine was the technology that could manufacture everlasting healthy bodies, the discipline that constantly confirmed the inescapably embodied nature of human life, and, finally, the conceptual framework whereby any cognitive achievement (and self-awareness was the greatest achievement in this field) was

seen as a process of self-healing (as Avicenna had done long before by significantly entitling his philosophical and scientific encyclopedia *The Book of Healing* [*Kitab al-Shifa*], published in 1027).<sup>5</sup> This therapy of the mind reached Descartes and Spinoza through Bacon, especially through his *Advancement of Learning* (1605) and *Novum organum* (1620). What Bacon had described as an attempt at “medicining the mind” (Bacon 2000: 149) became known as the question of the correct method for knowledge; soon an issue that had originated from demands of a rhetorical and ethical nature turned into a matter of gnosiology and epistemology, later sanctioned by a hoary tradition of textbooks and national schools of thought (Giglionni 2013).

Bacon was particularly concerned with the “care” (*cura*) of the mind as the foundation for ethical, social and political wholesomeness. He referred to this task as a cure of the mind (in the double meaning of *medicina* and *cultura*), a task to be conducted in parallel with knowledge of bodily life, its diseases and its therapy. The program had been outlined in the *Advancement of Learning*:

for as in Medicining of the body it is in order first to know the diuers Complexions and constitutions, secondlye the diseases, and lastlye the Cures: So in medicining of the Minde, after knowledge of the diuers Characters of mens natures, it foloweth in order to know the diseases and infirmit[i]es of the mind, which ar no other then the perturbations & distempers of the affections.

(Bacon 2000: 149)

In keeping with time-honoured divisions within the medical tradition (knowledge of the body, i.e. anatomy; therapy, i.e. cure of the illnesses; and prophylaxis, i.e. regimen), Bacon pointed out that mental health could be handled by either healing or pre-empting destructive passions, collecting “receipts & Regiments compounded & described, as may serue to recouer: or preserue the health and Good estate of the mind” (Bacon 2000: 151).

Bacon also used the label *cultura animi*, which Cicero had discussed in his *Tusculanae disputationes* (3.6). Taking medicine and husbandry as models was not accidental in this context. Bacon’s recommendation that, before it might undertake the task of knowledge, the mind should undergo a treatment (variously termed as *emendatio animi*, *expurgatio intellectus*, *georgica animi*), in the domains of both nature and society, is one of the most original aspects of his thought and it initiated a tradition in philosophy that would peak with Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (1790). By insisting on “medicining” the mind, Bacon was not simply referring to the three principal branches of the medical art (anatomy, therapy and prophylaxis), presenting them as ways of reconsidering the approach to philosophy; he was also bringing to the fore the subtle predicament already described by Cicero: how can one exercise right judgments when the very organ of judgment is ill (*Tusc.* 3.1)? In other words, was the mind able to heal itself (Descartes) or should the medicament come from the outside, that is, nature (Bacon)?<sup>6</sup>

As we will see, Bacon’s program for “medicining” the mind involved different stages and meanings: the purging of prejudices (the “cathartic” meaning); the growth in self-awareness (the “inductive” moment), designed to make the mind able to be in control of its imaginations and emotions (*idola*); the good use of judgment (what Bacon called the “wisdom of application”); and finally the deployment of patterns of orderly progress, which Bacon termed *machina intellectus* (“engine for thinking”) and Spinoza would further develop as “spiritual automaton.” From an ontological point of view, Bacon’s medicine of the mind rested on a precise idea of serial sequencing (*ordo*), in which the mind was related to nature, and nature to the mind, as parallel instantiations of one reality.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the medicine of the mind from the point of view of authors who were unsympathetic to the Stoic tradition or sometimes avowedly anti-Stoic, from Bacon to Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Limits of space and the scope and complexity of the topic prevent me from dwelling extensively and analytically on a large number of significant authors. Necessarily, I have to be selective and I can only sample from rather than exhaust the range of possibilities. I therefore will concentrate on Descartes and Baruch Spinoza (1631–77) as representative cases through which one can follow the reception of Bacon's recommendations for "medicining" the mind by later philosophers. While Descartes radically transformed the meaning of the Baconian cure, reintroducing characteristic elements of Stoic introspection, Spinoza's *intellectus emendatio* remained closer to Bacon's original intention, suggesting a treatment of the intellect (*modus medendi intellectus ipsumque expurgandi*) that aimed to heal the rift between nature and the mind. Like Bacon in the *Advancement of Learning* and *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* (On the worth and growth of the disciplines, 1623), Spinoza believed that curing the mind from its unfounded prejudices and expectations was preliminary to the attainment of one's emotional balance and moral betterment. He also shared with Bacon the fairly anti-Stoic view that the health of the mind required adaptation to the greater world of nature and a more optimistic use of the passions. His mature work, the *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata* (Ethics demonstrated in geometric order), published posthumously in 1677, was the full accomplishment of the program outlined in *De intellectus emendatione* (The emendation of the intellect), and was organized as a process through which the mind became increasingly aware of the surrounding reality while learning how to become happy. These diverse lines of inquiry all converged in Kant's doctrine of judgment, where the Baconian "wisdom" of application found full legitimization in the domains of both natural and moral philosophy.

### Francis Bacon: a cure for intellectual self-delusion

In publishing the first edition of his *Essays* in 1597, Bacon assured his readers through a dedicatory letter to his brother Anthony that he had put his "conceits" to the test in a very rigorous and severe manner ("I haue played my selfe the Inquisitor"). He remained therefore assured that the material expounded in the book was of great usefulness, for nothing in it was "contrarie or infectious to the state of Religion, or manners," but indeed "medicinable" (Bacon 1597: A3<sup>v</sup>). The "medicinable" nature of knowledge is the centerpiece of Bacon's philosophy. Here the medical metaphor should be understood as more than a simple trope. Rather, it was a program designed to realign human knowledge with reality by enhancing knowledge of nature, raising the level of ethical awareness and dramatically improving the material condition of humankind. For Bacon, the mind had lost touch with reality and was in need of urgent treatment. The treatment, however, could not come simply from the mind. As already mentioned, there is a fundamental anti-Stoic bent in Bacon's therapy of the soul, in that the health of the mind is heavily dependent on the health of the senses and the contribution of external reality (nature). In recognizing the reality of material needs, Bacon's therapy of the soul departed significantly from models of Stoic self-mastery.

Medicine of the mind, alternatively presented as a "culture," a "cure," or a "regimen," is a discipline that in the *Advancement of Learning* Bacon presented as a form of tacit knowledge, largely unwritten, orally transmitted, often completely resolved into the very act of doing things. As a result, this kind of knowledge ("an *Art* or *Science*") was still in a fragmentary and patchy ("deficient") condition, mostly aphoristic, made up of "scattered discourses" taken from other disciplines and professions, such as medicine, physiognomy, ethics, rhetoric,

history, poetry, religion, astrology, diplomacy, even digests of everyday experience and conversations: “this kind of obseruations wandreth in wordes, but is not fixed in Enquiry” and “they were neuer incorporate into Morall Philosophy” (Bacon 2000: 146–8, 149, 155). Bacon embedded his medicine of the mind within a larger system of moral philosophy, which he divided into different sections, one dealing with the “Exemplar and description of Good” and the other with what he called “the Georgicks of the Mind.” He presented the former as the “fruite of life,” the latter as the “Husbandry that belongeth thereunto.” Husbandry meant, first of all, a practice attentive to the pre-existing conditions of human action (be those matter, nature, the body, the senses, and the constraints of moral and political action). In developing his medicine of the mind, Bacon was thus recovering materials from previous traditions of thinking and acting, such as the Aristotelian meaning of virtue as practice, the Ciceronian understanding of philosophy as a way of life, the Senecan interpretation of Stoic introspection as a “reformation” of one’s life, even the Hippocratic recommendation that reinvigorating the senses might heal the obsessions and delusions of the mind:

I must Conclude with that *Aphorism of Hypocrates, Qui graui morbo correpti dolores non sentiunt, ijs mens aegrotat*. They neede medicine not onely to asswage the disease but to awake the sense.

(Bacon 2000: 146)

In the *Advancement of Learning*, in his effort to piece together the scattered fragments from different traditions and to reconstruct a proper discipline dealing with the “care” of the mind, understood as both *medicina* (therapy) and *cultura* (farming), Bacon outlined some of the defining features of this therapy: mental purification (*expurgatio intellectus*), ability to apply knowledge to particular circumstances (“wisedome of application”), development of self-awareness (induction) and the freedom to rely on orderly habits of thought and action (*machina intellectus*).

The “cathartic” and “purgative” dimensions in Bacon’s cure of the mind came straight from the medical tradition. Rehearsing characteristic Galenic themes, Bacon compared moral philosophy with medicine: just as the “good of the Body” was characterized by health, beauty, strength and pleasure, so “the good of the mynde” consisted in exercises designed “to make the minde sound, and without perturbation, *Beautifull* and graced with decencie: and *Strong* and *Agill* for all duties of life” (Bacon 2000: 156). In discussing the scope and limits of the mind’s powers, Bacon was very careful in distinguishing between that which could be changed (“by waye of alteration”) and that which could only be accommodated (“by waye of application onely”). Curing the mind was the same as “tilling” a ground where the soul and life had deep roots; in this way, one could learn to “worke out the knots and Stondes of the mind” (Bacon 2000: 147, 152). In marked contrast to characteristically Stoic lines of thought, Bacon reminded his readers that both medicine and husbandry were confronted with situations in which knowledge could not produce or change the object, but had to adapt to it:

The husbandman cannot command, neither the Nature of the Earth, nor the seasons of the weather: no more can the Physition the constitution of the patiente, nor the variety of Accidents. So in the Culture and Cure of the mynde of Man, two thinges are without our commaund: Poyntes of Nature, and pointes of Fortune.

(Bacon 2000: 147)



Bacon made very clear that natural dispositions (“Poyntes of Nature”) and contingent factors (“pointes of Fortune”) were not in man’s control; and yet, unlike the Stoics, he also thought that they could not be ignored.<sup>7</sup> He enumerated these “pointes” with remarkable precision: “sex,” “age,” “region,” “health and sicknesse,” “beauty and deformity,” “soueraingnty,” “nobility,” “obscure birth,” “riches” and “want,” to mention here only a few (Bacon 2000: 148–9). In his opinion, farming and medicine shared with moral philosophy the assumption that action needed to be adjusted to a pre-existing material – “as the knowledg of the diuersitye of groundes and Mouldes doth to Agriculture, and the knowledge of the diuersity of Complexions and Constitutions doth to the Phisition” (Bacon 2000: 149). While complete change or full assimilation was not possible, what could still be done, though, was to adapt man’s mind and will to the changing circumstances of reality. Quite differently from Stoic strategies of detachment and self-denial, Bacon’s insistence on application and accommodation recognized a level of passivity, which he characterized as “wise” and “industrious.” “Wisedome of application” was supposed to take account of natural predispositions and material situations as conditions of one’s ethical self-fulfillment:

when that we speake of sufferinge, wee doe not speake of a dull, and neglected sufferinge, but of a wise and industrious sufferinge, which draweth, and contriueth vse and aduantage out of that which seemeth aduerse and contrary; which is that properly which we cal, Accommodating or Applying.

(Bacon 2000: 147)

While acknowledging the impact of Stoic philosophy on the cure of the passions, Bacon thought that its contribution lay “rather in subtiltye of definitions” than “in actiue and ample descriptions and obseruations.” No doubt, they honed the treatment of specific passions, such as anger, and perfected the techniques underlying consolatory therapy (“Comforte vpon aduerse accidentes”). Even in this area, however, “poets and writers of Histories,” not Stoic philosophers, remained “the best Doctors” (Bacon 2000: 150).<sup>8</sup> Because of the many risks – both epistemological and ethical – involved in the exercise of introspection, Bacon linked the expansion of the mind’s scope to a gradual rediscovery of nature and the external world of cultural artifacts, experiments, thinking tools and social virtues (“charity being the most important one”). Philosophical inquiry was a way of rescuing the mind from a condition of estrangement from both nature and itself. Although it is certainly correct to say that the unfolding of a richer consciousness was a key component in Bacon’s cure of the intellect, his medicine of the mind was more a technology of the intellect than a program for inner meditation. Rather than plunging into the depths of the soul, the Baconian mind had to discipline itself by compiling natural histories of the passions, conversing with other people, travelling and devising plans of experimental research and commerce.

The cleansing of destructive passions, wise application of rules, accommodation to reality and growth of self-awareness were all ways of recognizing the complex nature of “reality.” As already said at the beginning of this chapter, Bacon’s care of the mind hinged on a notion of order that he described in terms of parallel correspondences between knowledge and reality, which God had created as such, but human sin had largely obfuscated. Furthermore, by “reality” Bacon meant nature in the first place, but he also included the world of social habits and political institutions, which, as a result of human action, had accrued on nature over the course of millennia. The most ancient myths of mankind were there to demonstrate that one should look at the growth of knowledge as both a natural and a social process. Within the specific field of moral philosophy, Bacon expressed the same point by

distinguishing between virtue and duty. Virtue required “a mind well formed & composed in it self,” duty “a minde well framed & disposed towards others.” He argued that knowledge of the individual good (“vertue”) could not be dissociated from knowledge of the social good (“duty”), for “neither can a man vnderstand vertue without some relation to Society, nor duety without an inwarde disposition.” To clarify this point, which undoubtedly presents some similarities with the Stoic doctrine of “assimilation” (*oikeiôsis*), Bacon resorted to a mechanical analogy: to project and build a machine was not the same as to use it; however, in order to build a machine that could be used by everyone, the engineer was supposed to envisage the engine’s “aptnesse” to be used (Bacon 2000: 142).<sup>9</sup> What Bacon called “respective,” “proportionate” or “comparatiue” duty was virtuous behavior which – once again departing from Stoic strictures – took into account the unintended consequences of one’s own actions, the effects of other people’s decisions, even the possibility of evil intentions in someone else’s behavior. He characterized the knowledge provided by “actiue men” as particularly “sound & healthful” precisely because they knew how to apply knowledge within material and social contexts of complex interactions. For this reason, he continued, “we are much beholden to *Macciauell* & others that write what men doe and not what they ought to do” (Bacon 2000: 143–5).

### Descartes: the self-healing power of the mind

Like Bacon, Descartes presented the “cultivation” of reason as one of the main objectives in the exercise of knowledge, if not the main one. By wisdom (*la recherche de la Sagesse*) he meant the summa of all human efforts directed at discovering the truth (*souuerain bien*), both at an individual level (*conduite de la vie*) and at the level of political engagement. A state where philosophers were allowed to conduct their inquiries was for him the highest good achievable by human beings (*le plus grand bien qui puisse estre*). In keeping with Bacon’s therapy of the mind, he described the practice of mental cultivation as occurring in two stages: a negative one, devoted to the cleansing of the mind, and a positive one, supplying the “matter” for thought. The former was supposed to occur by “eradicating” all wrong opinions (*mauuaises opinions*) and mistakes (*erreurs*) accumulated in the course of one’s life; the latter, by “amassing” all sorts of experiences so as to have proper food for the exercise of thinking (*la matiere de mes raisonnemens; la vraye nourriture*) (Descartes 1964–74: VI 22, 27–8; IX 3–7). As in Bacon’s case, the “wisdom of application,” that is, the faculty of making correct judgments (*la pouissance de ben juger*) was of the utmost importance. “It is not enough to have good sense [*l’esprit bon*]”; what really counted was “to apply it well” (*l’appliquer bien*) (Descartes 1964–74: VI 2, 21, 28). Like Bacon, finally, Descartes shunned the Stoic extremes of ethical rationalism, evident in some of the descriptions of virtue left by pagan philosophers, which often were nothing more than manifestations of indifference and cruelty (*une insensibilité ou un orgueil, ou un desespoir, ou un parricide*) (Descartes 1964–74: VI 8).

Descartes’s medicine of the mind, however, differed from Bacon’s original template in some decisive respects. Because of his jaded consideration of the mental faculties, Bacon had shunned situations in which the mind was left to its own devices (*intellectus sibi permissus*). By contrast, Descartes enjoyed the exercise of thinking (*j’avais tout loisir de m’entretenir de mes pensées*), which he regarded as the only way to attain the truth (Descartes 1964–74: VI 1–2). In his confident attitude towards the power of inner meditation, Descartes proved to be more “Stoic” than Bacon. While Bacon regarded specimens of plant and animal life, childhood, and bouts of mental illness as a rich source of experimental discoveries to be employed in natural histories of human passions and desires, for Descartes, the experimental significance of this

material towards a better understanding of the *cogito* was minimal. Indeed, he pointed out that in the early stages of our life, appetites and wrong opinions inculcated by teachers had prevented us from using the full potential of our reason (*l'usage entier de notre raison*, in Descartes 1964–74: VI 13). This does not mean that Descartes was not aware of the impact that material and external constraints would have on the mind. His method, though, was supposed to overcome the weakness of our mental faculties (*médiocrité de mon esprit*) and the short duration of bodily life (*courte durée de ma vie* in Descartes 1964–74: VI 3).

An important difference from Bacon's medicine of the mind had to do with Descartes's view of the will. Unlike Bacon, who was particularly concerned with the possibility that our will may be overwhelmed by uncontrollable desires, Descartes considered the will to be a rational appetite (Descartes 1964–74: VI 25–6, 28). Therapy was therefore quite different: rather than shaping appetites into patterns of virtuous action, starting with appetites at their most primitive level, as Bacon had explained in the *Novum organum* and *Sylva sylvarum* (Bacon 2004: 382–416; 1857–74: II 602, 618), Descartes envisaged the control of the passions as a top-down exercise, in which (and this too betrayed a more favorable disposition towards Stoic therapies of the mind) the will was able to restrain long-established chains of responses to reality in more rational sequences. In taking this approach in his directions on how to conduct one's thoughts, he combined the advantages of logic, geometrical analysis and algebra (Descartes 1964–74: VI 17–18). Although he regarded medicine as the most important discipline among the arts devoted to foster man's well-being, and in spite of presenting himself as a *physicien* of the passions (Descartes 1964–74: XI 326), the founding metaphors in Descartes's *cultura animi* were architectonic and mathematical, not medical. While Bacon had recognized the inescapability of a pre-existing condition (be that a "soil," a "body" or even an "object"), for Descartes the solution consisted in laying new foundations and ordering the train of thought according to relations of geometrical and mathematical nature (Descartes 1964–74: VI 29). To be sure, the idea of starting completely afresh gave Descartes immense freedom – in imagination, in desire and in will. The medical analogy (originally embraced by Chrysippus) was based on the idea that mental clarity would emerge out of a condition of illness, a process in which, as argued by Bacon, distortions and prejudices (the *idola*) were already present and could never be completely erased. Descartes's mathematical and architectonic model, by contrast, presupposed a disembodied self, which, precisely because it enjoyed an extraordinary level of creative freedom (*ce Moy, c'est à dire, l'Ame par laquelle ie suis ce que ie suis*), could reconstruct the horizons of its experience in the most appropriate way (Descartes 1964–74: VI 33).

Bacon's attempts at "medicining the mind," as we saw in the previous section, were strategically placed at the very juncture of natural and moral philosophy, so as to pave the way from the healed mind of the individual to healthy commonwealths reconciled with the inner motions of a recalcitrant nature. In this, Bacon's medicine of the mind was eminently social and political. Salvation was not to be found in the *ego*, but rather in a regenerated state of affairs. Reform of the intellect signified reform of society and mores. It was certainly no accident that Bacon's *Sylva sylvarum*, his great "forest" of experiments, ended with a hint at the irrepressibly social character of human nature. It was as if the famous one intellect of the Aristotelians, guarantor of all types of knowledge, had turned into a universal framework of social recognition:

The delight which men have in popularity, fame, honour, submission and subjection of other men's minds, wills, or affections (although these things may be desired for other ends), seemeth to be a thing in itself, without contemplation of consequence,

grateful and agreeable to the nature of man. This thing (surely) is not without some signification, as if all spirits and souls of men came forth out of one divine limbus; else why should men be so much affected with that which others think or say? The best temper of minds desireth good name and true honour: the lighter, popularity and applause: the more depraved, subjection and tyranny; as is seen in great conquerors and troublers of the world; and yet more in arch-heretics; for the introducing of new doctrines is likewise an affectation of tyranny over the understanding and beliefs of men.

(Bacon 1857–74: II 672)

Significantly, in the original edition of 1627, the final words of *Sylva sylvarum* were meant to accompany the reader into Bacon’s utopia, the New Atlantis. That was certainly not a mere typographical juxtaposition. A new experimental inquiry into the intricacies of matter and the mind was supposed to bring a universal reform of humankind. The social and political dimensions of the medicine of the mind – which, it should be said, were at the core of Plato’s view of philosophy as therapy (in both the *Republic* and *Timaeus*) – were precisely what Descartes rejected in the firmest of terms:

This is the reason why I cannot approve at all those restless muddlers [*ces humeurs brouillonnes et inquietes*] who, without having been called by their fortune or by their condition to handling public affairs, do not miss the opportunity always to undertake, at the level of ideas [*en idée*], some new reformation [*quelque nouvelle reformation*].

(Descartes 1964–74: VI 14–15)

In this domain, Descartes’s ambitions looked less prominent: “My plan never went beyond trying to reform my own thoughts and to build on a ground that belongs entirely to me [*de bastir dans un fons qui est tout à moi*]” (Descartes 1964–74: VI 15). And yet Descartes recognized the “law” that obliged each human being to participate in the production of the common good (*le bien general de tous les hommes*, in Descartes 1964–74: VI 61–2). In the letter he wrote as a preface to the 1647 French translation of his *Principia philosophiae* (*Principles of Philosophy*, originally published in 1644), Descartes made clear that by *sagesse* he not only meant practical wisdom (*la prudence dans les affaires*), but also a “perfect knowledge” of all the things man needed for a living (*la conduite de sa vie*), preserving his health (*la conseruation de sa santé*) and improving his knowledge (*l’inuention de tous les arts*). To better qualify this three-pronged characterization of wisdom, he introduced the image of the tree: philosophy represented the tree as a whole, metaphysics was its roots, physics the trunk, and medicine, mechanics and ethics were the principal branches (Descartes 1964–74: IX 2, 14). Once again, a metaphor was given the task of signaling a shift in priorities: rather than resorting to medical analogies of bodily fluidity and porousness, Descartes recovered time-honored images of philosophical arborescence, in which the branches and roots of human learning stem from the trunk of physics.

### **Spinoza: from *machina intellectus* to *automa spirituale***

Spinoza read Bacon (Spinoza 1925–87: IV 139). That reading, though, turned out to be rather disappointing, as he admitted in a letter to Oldenbourg (Spinoza 1925–87: IV 8–9). And yet Bacon’s influence should not be downplayed. The *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*, left unfinished, and in all likelihood written between 1657 and 1659, is dotted throughout

with Baconian motifs: the very idea that the intellect may be “amended”; the constant recommendation that the mind may achieve an intercourse with reality unmarred by delusions and false expectations (*commercium cum rebus*); the view of nature as the ultimate touchstone of certainty and reality; the imperative to refrain from thinking through abstractions (*ex abstractis aliquid concludere*); the understanding that *praejudicia* (Bacon’s *idola*) exercise a powerful influence over our mental life; the consideration of words as carriers of distorted representations of reality (*verba sunt pars imaginationis*); and, finally, the acknowledgement that economic progress favors the accumulation of knowledge (*augmentus scientiarum et artium*) (Spinoza 2009: 86, 112, 122, 88, 120, 66; 1925–87: II 16, 29, 34, 17, 33, 6).<sup>10</sup> Like Bacon, Spinoza regarded social and political order as an outgrowth of natural order; among the beneficial effects of communal life (*commune vitae institutum; vitae et societatis usus*), he insisted that the health of the individual mind depended on healing social unrest and divisions (Spinoza 2009: 90; 1925–87: II 18). At the same time, reiterating characteristic commonplaces of both classical and Christian traditions, Spinoza rejected the opinion that happiness might derive from social recognition (*fama, gloria, honor*), economic security (*divitiae, avaritia, nummorum acquisitio*) and lust (*libido*), all factors which, according to him, cast such a powerful spell on the mind that it became unable “to think of any other good” (Spinoza 2009: 64–70; 1925–87: II 5–8). Honor, in particular, was a difficult obstacle to circumvent in that it ruled one’s life according to the whims of popular opinion (*ad captum hominum*) (Spinoza 2009: 66; 1925–87: II 6).

What is more, Spinoza shared with Bacon the belief that the operations of the intellect needed to be distinguished with no ambiguity from those of the imagination. They both looked at words as effects of the imagination, as dangerous as the imagination itself (Spinoza 2009: 120; 1925–87: II 33). For Spinoza, the shift from the imagination to the intellect could only occur by reinterpreting the meaning of love and appetite. While human attachment to particular objects was responsible for a large number of individual and social “ills,” the kind of love that yearned after “eternal and infinite” reality would feed the mind only with joy (*laetitia*), with no intrusion of sadness (*tristitia*) (Spinoza 2009: 68; 1925–87: II 7). This good, capable of leading to the highest form of happiness (*summa felicitas*), was true (*verum bonum*), stable (*fixum*) and liable to be shared by the largest number of minds (*sui communicabile*) (Spinoza 2009: 74; 1925–87: II 10). The possibility that there could be universal participation in knowledge was the hallmark of Spinoza’s solution. He argued that happiness depended on taking on a nature (*acquirere naturam*) that would put everyone on a par with everyone else, that is, on reaching “the knowledge of the union that the mind has with nature as a whole,” thus creating the conditions, both material and intellectual, that would allow the greatest number of human beings to reconcile their differences and unite their desires (*cupiditates*) and intellects (*intellectus*) (Spinoza 2009: 68, 110–2; 1925–87: II 8, 26).

As Bacon had already pointed out, however, before engaging in any particular science or discipline, the intellect needed to undergo a treatment premised on assiduous meditation and continual practice.<sup>11</sup> In examining the best course of life for a human being, Spinoza compared the person striving for moral improvement to an individual suffering from a mortal illness. Significantly, he used the word “remedy” (*remedium*) (Spinoza 2009: 68; 1925–87: II 7). As suggested by Bacon in his discussions concerning the medicine of the mind, the medical model of the “care” of the soul was less abstract and more flexible than the one championed by Stoic rationalists. And just as both Bacon and Descartes had stressed the importance of medical progress in facilitating the work of cognitive and ethical fulfillment, so Spinoza acknowledged the role of medicine in fostering knowledge and happiness. Indeed, he claimed that a new model of comprehensive medicine was needed (*integra medicina concinnanda est*), and the reason was that health (*valetudo*), fortified by scientific and technological

means, played “not a small” role in securing tranquillity of mind. This was further evidence that “technology [*mechanica*] should not be despised in any way” (Spinoza 2009: 68; 1925–87: II 7).

In line with the canons of mental “medicining,” Spinoza’s “emendation” and “expurgation” of the mind aimed at making one’s intellect fit (*aptus*) for the task of knowing things with certainty and objectivity, so that true happiness could be achieved (Spinoza 2009: 72–4; 1925–87: II 9–10).<sup>12</sup> More than Bacon and Descartes, though, Spinoza emphasized the importance of self-awareness in his version of mental “emendation,” seen as an exercise directed at gaining a wider and deeper understanding of our nature. As a consequence, the method was “nothing other than reflexive knowledge [*cognitio reflexiva*]” or “the idea of an idea [*idea ideae*]” (Spinoza 2009: 84–6; 1925–87: II 15–16). Fully endorsing Descartes’s view of self-hood as the norm of true knowledge, Spinoza denied that “clear and distinct ideas” could ever be “false” (Spinoza 2009: 106; 1925–87: II 26). Thinking qua thinking contained the criterion of its veracity (*simplices cogitationes non posse non esse veras*), for truth resided in the very activity of the mind (*ipsa mentis potentia*), unaffected by “external causes” (Spinoza 2009: 108, 118; 1925–87: II 27, 32).

In agreement with Bacon, however, Spinoza also stressed the role of nature as the direct counterpart of the mind within a global order that was structured according to parallel series of causal activity, in which representations corresponded to things, and things to representations (Spinoza 2009: 86, 108; 1925–87: II 16, 25). The causal series of mental states (*concatenatio intellectus*) thus mirrored the causal series of nature (*Naturae concatenatio*). In order for sequences to be reliable as a match for both reality and representations, so that the mind could become able to reflect nature at the highest degree (*mens nostra ... quam maxime referet Naturam*), there had to be a being (*quoddam ens*) that was the cause of every single thing (*omnium rerum causa*) and whose representational power (*essentia objectiva*) was also the cause of all our ideas (Spinoza 2009: 126; 1925–87: II 36).

Therefore, since the method is the very process of reflexive knowledge [*methodus est ipsa cognitio reflexiva*], the fundamental principle that should govern our thoughts [*cogitationes*] can only be the knowledge of what constitutes the form of the truth, the knowledge of the intellect, and its properties and powers. Once we have achieved this knowledge, we will have the foundation from which we can deduce our thoughts [*cogitationes*], and the path through which the intellect, depending on its powers, will be able to reach the knowledge of eternal things.

(Spinoza 2009: 130; 1925–87: II 38)

Here Spinoza was following the idea of *machina intellectus*, theorized by Bacon (Gigliani 2013: 32). He reinterpreted the notion and renamed it “spiritual automaton.” Technological progress, in Spinoza’s opinion, had allowed men to perform “many more and more difficult operations with little exertion”; in precisely the same terms, the mind was endowed with the ability to create and perfect its own cognitive tools: “the intellect out of its innate power [*vi sua nativa*] creates for itself intellectual tools through which it acquires more powers for more intellectual works, and from these works he makes more tools, that is, the faculty of expanding the range of its investigations, and it proceeds in this way step by step until it reaches the peak of knowledge [*culmen sapientiae*]” (Spinoza 2009: 82; 1925–87: II 14). The ancients had already recognized how true knowledge proceeded from cause to effect; the difference for Spinoza was that they “never thought of the soul as acting according to certain laws, as if it were a sort of spiritual automaton” (Spinoza 2009: 118; 1925–87: II 32).

Spinoza's spiritual automaton epitomized the complementary intertwining of *methodus* and *cognitio reflexiva*, for the aim behind the method was "to have clear and distinct ideas, of such a kind, that is, which derive from pure mind, and not from the accidental motions of the body" (Spinoza 2009: 72–4; 1925–87: II 122). Bacon's "intellectual machine," turned into Spinoza's "spiritual automaton," would thus become the signature of post-Cartesian *medicina mentis* during the eighteenth century.

## Conclusion

In the phrase *medicina mentis* ("medicine of the mind") the genitive *mentis* can have two meanings, one subjective (i.e. the medicine that the mind administers to the passions in order to heal unruly emotions) or objective (i.e. the medicine that is administered to the mind through external means of control). The subjective genitive (mind's medicine) is implied in the way in which Descartes understood the cure: the mind is inherently healthy and it is the only true treatment. By contrast, the objective genitive (medicine for the mind) is the sense understood by Bacon: the mind is ill (chronically ill, as it were) and needs urgent treatment. As I argued in this chapter, this is in fact a significant difference. Through it we can gauge how Bacon's ideas on method and emotional therapy were received by some major philosophers of the early modern period. More generally, my principal aim in this chapter was to resituate Bacon within the map of early modern philosophy, including metaphysics and moral philosophy, and against the background of the persistent appeal of Stoic therapies of the mind during that time. Apart from a number of issues concerning method, experimental knowledge and empiricism, Bacon is still not taken seriously as a proper philosopher. This form of historiographic snobbery is evident when one looks at the way in which the evolution of modern thinking is still presented in general surveys of early modern philosophy. And yet in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781), Kant wrote that the Copernican revolution of the mind had begun with Bacon and his *Novum organum*. Obviously something must have got lost in the later reception of Bacon's philosophy. The main reason behind this fall into historiographic oblivion lies in the fact that the mathematical meaning of method prevailed over the medical one, and models of disembodied rationalism obfuscated the role played in knowledge by all sorts of material constraints. As a result, the medical import in Descartes's and Spinoza's methods for healing the mind turned back to the status of metaphorical sense originally championed by the Stoic thinkers. While for Bacon the medicine of the mind was a pivotal section in his systematic account of moral philosophy, Descartes placed that very medicine as the starting point of the philosophical exercise in the form of, first, a skeptical remedy and, then, logical training. In the hands of Descartes and then Spinoza, Bacon's medicine of the mind turned into disembodied *mathesis*.

This evolution is particularly evident in the *Medicina mentis* (Medicine of the mind, 1687) by Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus (1651–1708), an interesting example of cross-pollination between Bacon's and Spinoza's medicines of the mind. While Bacon, in order to help the mind amend its structural defects and individual limits, had placed his hopes in the progress of technology seen as a spontaneous outgrowth of nature's own ingenuity, Tschirnhaus turned to mathematics as the best "medicine" against self-delusion. In line with Descartes and Spinoza, and following the example of mathematics (algebra in particular) rather than any natural history or anatomy of mental powers, Tschirnhaus recommended going beyond the level of descriptive and factual knowledge (*cognitio historica* and *philosophus historialis*) and following an intellectual therapy based on the notion of intellectual "accessibility":

the name of “real philosopher” belongs to he who reaches such a level of knowledge that he understands that it is in his power to bring to light, with the forces of his own mind [*propriis ingenii sui viribus*], everything that is unknown but accessible to the intellect [*intellectui pervium*].

(Tschirnhaus 1695: \*\*4')

*Propriis ingenii sui viribus* – this had been precisely the disease for which Bacon had developed his intellectual medicine. In rehabilitating *ingenium* and its powers, Tschirnhaus made the rather un-Baconian gesture of combining mathematical cogency with introspective scrutiny. A remarkable difference between Bacon’s medicine of the mind and post-Cartesian mental *expurgationes* consisted in the greater emphasis that the latter placed in self-awareness, as Descartes, Spinoza and Tschirnhaus were more confident than Bacon in the power that the mind had to cure itself and dispel self-delusion. *Fictio nullo modo sit timenda*, “do not fear fiction,” Spinoza stated significantly in *De intellectus emendatione* (Spinoza 2009: 104; 1925–87: II 25). Indeed, in less Baconian terms, Spinoza insisted that “that which constitutes the form of true thinking [*vera cogitatio*] should be looked for in thinking itself and is to be deduced by the nature of the intellect” (Spinoza 2009: 106–8; 1925–87: II 27). Bacon had precisely warned against this possibility. Paraphrasing a famous proverb we might sum up Bacon’s position with the following words: *Intellectus, cura te ipsum*, “intellect, cure thyself”; or otherwise said, one cannot heal the intellect with its own intellectual resources when the intellect is the real problem.

In 1787, the second edition of Immanuel Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* opened with a quotation from Bacon’s *Novum organum*: the truth of the matter (*res*), the Lord Chancellor had said in that work, was not opinion (*opinio*), but work (*opus*), while the end of the general renewal of knowledge (*instauratio*) lay in leading human beings to forms of general and mutual consultation (*in commune consulant*).<sup>13</sup> In his *Kritik* Kant praised judgment (*Urteilstkraft*) as one of the highest faculties of knowledge (the others being intellect and reason) and one that was mostly concerned with the Baconian activity of *consulere*. The reason was that the intellect, as the faculty of rules, needed a complementary faculty – judgment – in order to apply general maxims to particular cases. Kant described this faculty as a kind of inborn ingenuity, which could improve only by being practiced, using examples and devoting oneself to study, and not because the faculty in question could be taught. For this reason, Kant went on, there was no remedy when someone lacked judgment. In attributing *Urteilstkraft* to physicians, judges and politicians, he meant Baconian “wisdom of application” (Kant 1911: 96–7). Under a different guise and after almost two centuries of conceptual redefinitions, the spirit of the Baconian “medicining of the mind” was still alive through the concept of “wise” application. Here it is important to add a final qualification: although technology and medicine represented the backbone of early modern medicines of the mind, both in terms of material progress and philosophical models, Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza and Tschirnhaus did not subscribe to plans involving technocratic or medicalizing managements of man’s life. Furthermore, they all recognized health, both physical and mental, as a crucial prerequisite, while rejecting the Stoic assumption that the mind could reach unmediated control over the body, thus resolving happiness into a state of mental contentment. This, too, was yet another exegetically productive aspect in Bacon’s “wisdom of application.”

### Acknowledgement

Research leading to this article was supported by the ERC Grant 241125 MOM.



## Notes

- 1 On Galen's use of Chrysippean sources, see Gill 2010; on *De placitis Hippocratis and Platonis* in the Renaissance, see Nutton 1988.
- 2 On the set of critical issues underlying the attempts to prolong life, at both the natural and social level, in Bacon's philosophy, see Giglioni forthcoming.
- 3 For an example of early modern Galenic reception that was extremely original and influential (especially in the domain of philosophy), see Huarte de San Juan 1989. The literature on Renaissance Galenism is immense. A classic starting point remains Temkin 1973.
- 4 On Descartes's medical philosophy, see Aucante 2006.
- 5 On the "medical vocation" of philosophy and its antecedents in Avicenna's *Kitab al-Shifā*, see Caygill 2010.
- 6 On early modern *cultura animi*, see Corneanu 2011.
- 7 With respect to natural change, Bacon distinguished situations in which nature was "peremptory" and others in which it admitted "a latitude" (Bacon 2000: 151).
- 8 A more extended discussion of Bacon's views on Stoicism can be found in Giglioni 2012.
- 9 On Lipsius's reinterpretation of classical Stoic *oikeiōsis*, see Giglioni 2011.
- 10 Descartes, too, recognized the need to rely on large amounts of money (*grandes despenses*) and public funding (*le public*) to collect all the "experiences" necessary, in Baconian terms, to pass from individual to shared knowledge (Descartes 1964–74: IX 17).
- 11 Spinoza 2009: 72; 1925–87: II 9: "ante omnia excogitandus est modus medendi intellectus, ipsumque, quanto initio licet, expurgandi, ut feliciter res absque errore, et quam optime intelligat."
- 12 Spinoza 2009: 84; 1925–87: II 15: "vera Methodus est via, ut ipsa veritas, aut essentiae objectivae rerum, aut ideae (omnia illa idem significant) debito ordine quaerantur."
- 13 See Bacon 2004: 22–4.

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# 14

## STOIC THEMES IN EARLY MODERN FRENCH THOUGHT

*Michael Moriarty*

Early modern French readers learned much about Stoicism from two men, Cicero and Seneca, who died violent deaths, victims of civil war or tyranny. The authors' fate only made their lessons more relevant. France was ravaged by the Wars of Religion (1562–98): to die in battle, or at the hand of a murderer, perhaps as one of the victims of a massacre, was an entirely conceivable fate. Knocked unconscious by a fall from his horse, Montaigne's first thought on coming round was that he had been shot in the head (*Essais* 2.6, 374/419–20).<sup>1</sup> He might well have been: his area was on the front-line of the religious wars. The essay in which he recounts this event is called "De l'exercitation" ("On Practice"), a key theme of Stoic psychological pedagogy (see, for instance, Seneca, *Ep.* 76.34–5). Montaigne suggests that the experience of a sudden loss of consciousness is worth examining for the insight it may give us into the process of dying (2.6, 372/418). (Seneca himself compares the experience of dying with that of fainting; *Ep.* 77.9.) Philosophy can seldom have seemed more relevant to daily life. Its connection with politics is likewise clear. Almost every major exponent of Stoicism throughout the period uses political metaphors for psychological conflicts: the passions, for instance, are stigmatized as rebels against the legitimate authority of reason.

Montaigne's engagement with Stoicism is complex: but to say that is not to imply that everyone else's attitude was straightforward. Clearly, an early modern French person could not adopt the whole Stoic package of materialistic pantheism. But if the materialism was overlooked, and the Stoic language of divinity understood in a theistic sense, many aspects of the ethics could be Christianized. Guillaume du Vair's *Philosophie morale des Stoïques* (1585; Du Vair 1945) is a good example of this. The restatement of Stoic ethics was occasionally conducted in a philosophically eclectic spirit (Seneca himself, after all, had authorized borrowings from rival schools): Descartes's treatise on the passions makes no explicit reference to earlier philosophical discussions except to dismiss them *en bloc*; yet his correspondence with Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia shows him willing to attempt to synthesize Stoic, Epicurean, and Aristotelian ethical perspectives. Moreover, there is a strong anti-Stoic current throughout the period. Currents, rather: for while some authors simply criticize the theory on empirical-psychological grounds as impracticable, others reject it in terms of some alternative ethical theory, or for religious reasons. Those committed in particular to Augustinian theology were likely to espouse the master's hostility to Stoicism, as an ethic based on pride. Yet even critics in this tradition such as Pascal and Malebranche concede the value of aspects of Stoic theory.

### **Guillaume du Vair**

Du Vair (1556–1621) was the leading exponent of Neostoicism in late sixteenth-century France. His translation of Epictetus's *Enchiridion*, *Le manuel d'Épictète*, was published in 1591. Like the Roman thinkers mentioned above, he combined philosophy with social engagement: in politics, the judicature, and finally the church. In the Wars of Religion, he initially supported the ultra-Catholic Holy League, before going over to the Politique faction of moderate Catholics committed to the support of the monarchy. His career as a magistrate culminated in his appointment in 1616 to the high office of *garde des sceaux*. From 1617 to his death he was also bishop of Lisieux. His works were often republished: but the last complete edition appeared in 1641, which suggests that he went out of fashion thereafter.

His *De la constance et consolation ès calamitez publiques* (Of constancy and consolation in public calamities, 1594; Du Vair 1619) connects philosophy and politics in dramatic fashion. It recounts a series of conversations between four friends trapped in a Paris dominated by the Holy League, and besieged by Henry of Navarre (the future Henry IV), whose claim to the throne they support. The narrator laments the misfortunes of his country: his friends offer philosophical consolation of a Stoic stamp. Passions like grief are based on opinion, and distort reality; the world is governed by Providence, and thus everything that happens must have some kind of purpose; the immaterial soul is immortal, and there must be an afterlife in which the designs of Providence will be fulfilled (Stoicism here is plainly fused with and subordinated to a Christian outlook).

In *Philosophie morale des Stoïques* (1585) Du Vair had offered a more abstract exposition. Its starting point is as much Aristotelian as Stoic, inasmuch as it insists on the teleological aspects of nature, and their implication for humankind. Man, like inanimate things, is endowed with inclination; like the animals, with sensation; but his exclusive possession is reason. This, then, conditions the end to which all his actions should be directed, and his happiness will consist in the attainment of that end. "End" here is synonymous with "good," good consisting in "being and acting according to nature" (64). In this case, as for the ancient Stoics, this means living by the exercise of right reason, which is in turn synonymous with virtue. Nothing else (health, wealth, or other advantages) can be part of the good; they can at best be means to attaining the good, but so can their contraries. (Here, then, is an alignment with the Stoics against Aristotle.) The life of reason is incompatible with the passions. These, as in the scholastic tradition, are defined as movements of the sensitive appetite; but, crucially, the definition adds "violent," that is to say, unnatural, and thus introduces a Stoic perspective. Such movements occur when the senses go beyond their remit of providing information and, deceived by appearances, act directly on the concupiscible and irascible powers without reference to reason. Du Vair's metaphor for this process could not be more historically apt: reason, when thus ignored, is like the magistrate in a state troubled by sedition (70–1). The origin of all the passions is in a false judgment or opinion that a given object is good or evil, which is then followed by a vehement movement towards or away from it. To forestall being taken by surprise by such movements, we must learn to distinguish what is in our power from what is not; for what is not in our power (health, wealth, reputation, and so forth) is neither good nor evil (72). What is in our power is our valuations, decisions, and desires (since our desires involve a judgment of an object as good or evil). But since these inform our actions, they too are all in our power: for our will is strong enough to regulate and direct all our actions by reason. Passion, being aroused by external objects, is an external force, towards which we may strengthen our resistance by precepts, reflections, and examples (72–5). Premeditation familiarizes the philosopher with misfortune in advance, and

strengthens him against it when it occurs (88, 91, 95). Evil can come to us only from ourselves: if our reason is as it should be we are invulnerable (92). We should not identify ourselves with our body, the role of which is to be subservient to the soul (89).

But Du Vair's Stoicism is not purely defensive: it involves the practice of moral duties ("offices"). These are ranked in a hierarchy, in keeping with the goodness of the object. Thus our first duty is to God, in whose providence we should firmly believe (100–1). Our highest human attachment should be to our country, then to parents, children, wives, and kin (104–5). But we have duties to ourselves: self-respect is a crucial imperative, and we must take care to do nothing in private or in public of which we should be ashamed. The *bienséance* (decorum) Du Vair advocates here will become an important item in the lexicon of seventeenth-century social ethics (107). The body, though subordinate to the soul, is a necessary instrument of life, and should therefore be looked after by diet and exercise. Moreover, it must, so to speak, express our moral nature through gravity of expression and deportment; our speech should be measured and refined (108–10). Daily self-examination is essential, and a source of rich satisfaction if we verify that all is well with us; and each day should close with a prayer to God to enlighten and aid our understanding, so that it may direct all our other faculties (113).

Du Vair's Stoicism is not, then, simply intended to strengthen the individual in a time of trouble, but to foster a social ideal of behavior: thoughtful, measured, refined, dignified, responsible. It is the ideal of a magistrate or civil servant rather than a nobleman. In insisting on the distinction between true honor, founded on the consciousness of virtue, and that which depends on the opinion of the vulgar, and rejecting the idea that ambition is an intermediate stage to virtue, since it favors the concealment rather than the eradication of vice, Du Vair is probably criticizing aristocratic values (80–1). The social model he advocates was to be taken up by the resurgent absolutist monarchy in the early decades of the seventeenth century (on the political dimension of Neostoicism see Keohane 1980; Oestreich 1982).

## Montaigne

The once influential division of Montaigne's thinking into three phases, Stoic, Skeptic, and Epicurean, is now discounted: radically eclectic, he never committed to, or rejected, any specific philosophy (Cave 2007: 37; Scholar 2010: 5–6). As J. B. Schneewind puts it, he tries on different moral philosophies, always treating them "as offering ways of living" (Schneewind 2005: 214). None the less, explicitly Stoic accents are perhaps most audible in the chapters of Book 1, such as the twentieth, "Que philosophe, c'est apprendre à mourir" ("To Philosophize Is to Learn How to Die"). The title comes from the most Stoical of Cicero's works of moral philosophy, the *Tusculan Disputations* (1.30.74). Preparation for death, says Montaigne, closely following Seneca, is paramount, because this is the only misfortune we can never be spared (1.20, 83/91–2; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 70.18). If death frightens us, how can we live our life – except, as the common people do, by refusing to think about it, which Montaigne terms brutish stupidity (84/92–3)? To learn to die, through constant reflection on death, is to emancipate oneself from slavery (86–7/96; cf. *Ep.* 26.10). In Stoic fashion, Montaigne encourages us to place our death in the perspective of the universe: the difference between a short life and a long, when compared with eternity, is utterly insignificant (92/102; cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.94). In a long and noble prosopopoeia, Nature urges us to see our own death as part of the order of the universe, and as an inescapable condition of life. Length of life is nothing, for the longest life is followed by death for eternity: what matters is the use we make of whatever lifespan we are given. Our life is caught up in the movement of the world as a whole, and one day we shall reach the destination we have been travelling to all our life (92–6/102–7). The idea of Nature's

prosopopoeia, along with some of the arguments she voices, comes from Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 3.933–62; but there are also borrowings from Seneca; see for instance *Ep.* 49.10 and 77.13. But at the start of the chapter, Montaigne makes the aggressively anti-Stoic point that even in virtue, the ultimate goal we aim at is pleasure (“volupté”) (82/90).

Another great Stoic theme explored by Montaigne is the distinction between things in themselves and the way we perceive them. Thus he devotes a chapter (1.14) to the proposition that the taste of good and evil things depends largely on the opinion we have of them, and begins it with an allusion to Epictetus: “Les hommes (dit une sentence Grecque ancienne) sont tourmentez par les opinions qu’ils ont des choses, non par les choses mesmes” (There is an old Greek saying that men are tormented not by things themselves but by what they think about them) (50/52; cf. Epictetus, *Ench.* 5, 16). These words were inscribed in Montaigne’s library: his immediate source is thought to have been Stobaeus’s anthology, in Gessner’s Latin translation. If this is so, then even apparent evils like death, poverty, and pain are such only because we judge, or imagine, them to be so, and we can thus neutralize them by modifying our judgment (50–1/52–3). Montaigne tests this theory against a series of anecdotes: strikingly, he argues that pain is the primary evil, since we fear death and poverty chiefly for the pain they bring (56/59). Pain itself is not a matter of imagination or opinion, to be thought away: but we can somewhat limit its effect on our soul (55–6/57–9). On the whole Montaigne endorses the Epictetan view that our experience is shaped by our interpretation of it. But there are two qualifications that need making here: first, he suggests that any reason anyone can find to despise death and endure pain is acceptable if it works for that person (67/71–2): there is no need to rise to the level of philosophical wisdom, as a true Stoic would urge. Second, in making the claim that we do not apprehend things in themselves, he is using language he will recycle in his exposition of Pyrrhonist skepticism in 2.12, *An Apology for Raymond Sebond*: ‘si l’estre originel de ces choses que nous craignons, avoit credit de se loger en nous de son autorité, il logerait pareil et semblable en tous’ (If the original essence of the thing which we fear could confidently lodge itself within us by its own authority it would be the same in all men) (51/52–3; cf. 2.12, 562/633). But not only does he superimpose other philosophical positions on those of Stoicism, he is perfectly willing to criticize Stoicism as well as to borrow from it (Quint 1998: 8). For instance, in 3.12, he sharply criticizes the idea of mental preparation for death, even quoting with scorn the Ciceronian maxim he had earlier endorsed that philosophy is about learning to die. Instead of being denounced, peasants are now commended for ignoring the prospect of death, until it is actually coming upon them: if this is stupidity, it coincides with the ultimate benefit of knowledge (1051–2/1190–2). None the less, it is impossible to deny the shaping and enabling influence of Stoicism on Montaigne’s thought: the Stoic ideal of transforming our perceptions by thinking about them helped to foster Montaigne’s concern with the act of thinking as itself an object of thought (Cave 2007: 68–73).

## **Charron**

Pierre Charron (1541–1603), belongs, like Montaigne, to the history of skepticism as well as of Stoicism. He was heavily indebted to Montaigne, and indeed to Du Vair, as he himself acknowledges in the prefatory note to Book 1, chapter 18 (153);<sup>2</sup> the borrowings from Du Vair are especially marked in his initial description of the passions (compare Charron, *De la sagesse* 1.18, 155–9, and Du Vair, *Philosophie* 69–72). His ideal of wisdom is clearly Stoic in that it involves the elimination, rather than the moderation, of passion, and in the assertion that reason and premeditation can bring about this result (*De la sagesse* 2.1, 379–83).

Moreover, he uses Nature as a normative category, and in a language markedly reminiscent of Stoicism (Horowitz 1971):

The teaching of all the wise states that to live well is to live according to nature, that the supreme good in this world is to consent to nature, that in following nature as one's guide and mistress, we shall never go astray, [...] "nature" here meaning the equity and universal reason that shines in us, that contains and hatches in itself the seeds of all virtue, probity, and justice.

(De la sagesse 2.3, 424)

But Charron is not a mere compiler: he develops a particular conception of wisdom that gives precedence to our duty to ourselves over all other duties (Keohane 1980: 135–44).

### Descartes

Descartes was taught moral philosophy in the Jesuit college of La Flèche. In the *Discourse on Method* he calls into question the benefits of what he learned: ancient moral writings are like magnificent palaces built on sand and mud. They celebrate the virtues, but their conception of them is flawed: "and often what they call by this fine name is nothing but a case of callousness, or vanity, or desperation, or parricide" (Pt 1, AT VI 8).<sup>3</sup> The particular criticisms (insensibility and pride) are stock topics of anti-Stoic polemic. On the other hand, the maxims for the conduct of life that Descartes lists later in the *Discourse* suggest that his studies of the ancients were not a complete waste of time; for the third consists in the reflection that "nothing lies entirely within our power except our thoughts"; we must learn to control these, because everything else is outside our control (Pt 3, AT VI 25). There is an explicit reference to ancient philosophers in this passage, and it is clear that Descartes has the Stoics in mind, especially Epictetus, with his distinction between what is, and what is not, in our power (*Ench.* 1). (For a detailed list of Stoic sources for the whole passage, see Gilson in Descartes 1987: 250–4.)

Descartes's philosophical activity engaged only peripherally with ethical concerns until the mid-1640s. He then began a correspondence with Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, a niece of Charles I of Great Britain, learned and highly intelligent. The initial letters deal with philosophical issues, for which Elisabeth's eye is extremely acute, but the theme of Elisabeth's ill health, particularly her chronic melancholy, gradually comes to the fore. Faithful to the ancient conception of philosophy as therapeutic (Nussbaum 1994), Descartes resorts to "the means which philosophy provides for acquiring that supreme felicity which common souls vainly expect from fortune, but which can be acquired only from ourselves" (letter to Elisabeth, 21 July 1645, AT IV 252). He suggests they discuss Seneca's *On the Happy Life*, but soon becomes irritated by the treatise's verbosity and lack of conceptual clarity, and this leads him to develop his own ethical reflections. These are consciously syncretistic, in that he aims to find the common core in which Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics agree. Happiness is not itself the supreme good, but the contentment that comes from possessing that good. The supreme good itself is virtue, because it is the only one that depends entirely on our free will. Here he agrees with the Stoic Zeno, but he rejects Zeno's dissociation of virtue and pleasure:

By equating all the vices, however, he made this virtue so severe and so inimical to pleasure that I think only depressed people, or those whose minds are entirely detached from their bodies, could be counted among his adherents.

(To Elisabeth, 18 August 1645, AT IV 276)

(The last sentence is particularly important: for all his metaphysical belief in the real distinction of mind and body, Descartes's ethical reflections always presuppose the union of body and soul.) But he goes on to say that the goal or motive of all our actions is rightly identified by Epicurus as pleasure, in the broad sense: "for although the mere knowledge of our duty might oblige us to do good actions, yet this would not cause us to enjoy any happiness if we got no pleasure from it" (AT IV 276). Happiness, then, is the contentment that comes from the practice of virtue. Of course, the ancient Stoics themselves did not disdain to seek illumination from Epicurus; Descartes, however, goes further in his attempt to synthesize the two schools theoretically.

Descartes's last work, *The Passions of the Soul*, was clearly inspired by this correspondence with Elisabeth. But it does not incorporate the general discussion of ethics just mentioned. It is, however, rich in ethical themes of Stoic origin, despite Descartes's initial statement that "the teachings of the ancients about the passions are so meagre and for the most part so implausible that I cannot hope to approach the truth except by departing from the paths they have followed" (art. 1). For Descartes the passions are perceptions of physical processes, and they are confused in that we experience them as if they were taking place in and only in the soul. They are thus to be distinguished from the intellectual emotions that relate to purely mental processes, like the satisfaction of solving a difficult problem or joy in the experience of our willpower. These intellectual emotions are a powerful potential source of contentment (art. 147); but happiness depends also on establishing a good relationship with the passions. There is no question of seeking to eradicate them, for they have a vital function. As the senses preserve our body by providing information about the physical world, not in itself, but as a source of benefit or harm, so the passions, generally mobilized by sensations, dispose us to act appropriately in response to potential benefit or harm. Yet in particular circumstances they may need to be checked. But since the link between passion and action is always some desire aroused by the passions, "it is this desire which we should take particular care to control" (art. 144). The Epictetan distinction is now again brought into play: the failure to regulate our desires generally results from the failure "to distinguish adequately the things which depend wholly on us from those which do not depend on us at all" (art. 144). To regulate futile desires for what is outside our control, we are to accustom ourselves to the thought "nothing can possibly happen other than as Providence has determined from all eternity. Providence is, so to speak, a fate or immutable necessity" (art. 145); this is a striking blend of Christian and Stoic language, which indicates that Descartes does, after all, see human life as taking place within a divinely established cosmic order (Providence has, however, left room for the acts of our free will [art. 146]: the necessity applies to those events that are not in our control). Since nothing truly belongs to us besides our free will, the only legitimate ground for self-esteem is the good use we make of our will. Self-esteem of this kind Descartes terms "générosité" ("generosity," in the sense of "moral nobility") (arts 152–3). The term can be seen as his equivalent of Aristotelian "magnanimity" (he uses the word in art. 54); this is an indication of the eclecticism of his approach to ethics. But in so far as he acknowledges a legitimate self-esteem based on the practice of virtue, he is dissenting from the Augustinian thesis, targeted especially at the Stoics, of the incompatibility of virtue and self-esteem.

Descartes's ethical thinking displays a further debt to the Stoics, which belies the image of his philosophy as built around an isolated ego. For he asserts that:

Though each of us is a person distinct from others, whose interests are accordingly in some way different from those of the rest of the world, we ought still to think that none of us could subsist alone and that each one of us is really one of the many



parts of the universe, and more particularly a part of the earth, the state, the society and the family to which we belong by our domicile, our oath of allegiance and our birth. And the interests of the whole, of which each of us is a part, must always be preferred to those of our own particular person.

(*To Elisabeth, 15 September 1645, AT IV 293*)

This is a typically Stoic theme, to which Seneca, for instance, gives eloquent expression (*Ep.* 95.52–3).

### **Stoicism outside moral philosophy**

Stoicism was not confined to the study and the lecture room. In a debased instrumentalized version it could be adapted for ideological ends. Nicolas Faret's *L'Honnête Homme ou L'Art de plaire à la cour* (Faret 1925 [1630]) is a good example. The title might at first sight mean "the honorable man," in keeping with the Latin adjective *honestus* and in particular the Stoic concept of the *honestum* (the morally good). Faret does indeed say that he makes no distinction between an *honnête homme* and a good man ("homme de bien") (39). But the true meaning of the term is delivered by the subtitle: the "art of pleasing people at Court." In Faret and later writers, *honnête homme* in fact emerges as the nearest equivalent of the English "gentleman," in that it registers moral imperatives, but relates these to the maintenance of a social position. Thus Faret speaks of the courtier's prime goal as being virtue, but it turns out that this is the means to the end of establishing one's reputation (23). The mastery of passion is likewise held up not as a pure ethical ideal but as a maxim for social interaction: we should master ourselves and command our feelings ("affections") if we wish to gain the good feeling of others (69). This shows how Stoicism could be adapted to play a role in the process sometimes called "curialization": the imposition, concomitant with and conducive to the establishment of royal absolutism, of new standards of self-restraint and self-control, first on courtiers, and then on society at large (see Elias 1983: 104–11).

Its influence on literary culture was immense. Pierre Corneille (1606–84), the first of France's three great playwrights of the seventeenth century, was too much of a dramatist not to realize the theatrical problems of putting Stoicism on the stage. A character who reacts impassively to appalling misfortunes is unlikely to stir the sympathy or the emotions of the audience. Yet the struggle to overcome emotion, he knew, can be intensely dramatic. Two examples must stand for many. In *Cinna* (published 1643) the title character is a favorite of the Emperor Augustus who conspires to overthrow his benefactor, for the sake of avenging his grandfather Pompey. When the plot is betrayed, Augustus's first instinct is to inflict revenge: but he magnanimously forgives, exulting in his self-command ("I am master of myself, as of the universe"; 5.3.1696). He thus replaces the cycle of vengeance by a benign competition in mutual benefits. Corneille's key source is Seneca's *De clementia* (1.9), whence he takes the plot and much of the detail of his speeches. In *Polyeucte* (publ. 1643), he depicts the pagan daughter of a Roman provincial governor whom her father has separated from the Roman she loves and forced to marry the local nobleman of the title. She seems to display a perfectly plausible familiarity with Stoicism when she confesses her former feelings to her confidante: to be affected physically by emotion, she says, is not culpable, if one masters one's feelings by reason; and virtue is tested and affirmed in the struggle against passion (1.3.165–8; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 57.4–5; 71.29; 74.31; 13.1). When her former lover, now an imperial favorite, turns up, she initially asserts the power of reason to dispel unwanted feeling, but is led to admit that the underlying emotions are still rebellious; reason's precarious control is not

mastery, but tyranny (the recurrent use of political metaphors for psychical relationships has been noted above) (2.2.475–8, 500–4). In the end she stands by her new husband, even when he publicly professes himself a Christian and is condemned to death; she even espouses his faith, presenting her conversion as the fruit of divine grace (5.5.1719–46). Reason, then, had proved an insufficient foundation for virtue. Possibly, though, Corneille is implying that the gift of grace is a reward for her sincere efforts to govern her actions by reason. In that case, the point would be that Christianity does not destroy, but perfects Stoicism. This was not a view that commended itself to the neo-Augustinian critics of Stoicism to whom we now turn.

### **Anti-Stoicism**

Not all seventeenth-century critiques of Stoicism were Augustinian in inspiration: a case in point is that of the influential essayist Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac (Sutcliffe 1959: 113–20). But from the 1640s on, there was a sustained theoretical assault on Stoicism from neo-Augustinian theologians. They were in fact replaying Augustine's controversy with Pelagius and his followers, who asserted that we could fulfill the moral law by the exercise of reason and will, without any need for grace in the sense of a divine influence on the individual soul, and who cited the virtues of the ancient heroes and philosophers as proof. Augustine, however, replied that since these virtues were not subordinated to the love of God, they were more of the nature of vices than virtues; this was true even of those virtues allegedly pursued for their own sake, which were in fact inspired by pride (*De civitate Dei* 19.25; on the controversy over pagan virtues see Moriarty 2011). In his powerful and lengthy restatement of Augustine's doctrine Jansenius (1585–1638), Bishop of Ypres, and the most powerful spokesman for Roman Catholic neo-Augustinianism, specifically assimilated Pelagianism and Stoicism (*Augustinus*, vol. 1, *De haeresi Pelagiana* 5.1, 236, Jansenius 1640). Jansenius and his followers were particularly troubled by modern trends in Roman Catholic theology that they saw as dangerously close to Pelagianism in the stress they laid on human free will. Stoicism thus became embroiled in the early modern theological polemic against the alleged revival of Pelagianism.

A particularly curious example of this is provided by François La Mothe Le Vayer's treatise *On the Virtues of the Pagans*, first published in 1641–42. Le Vayer is best known as an exponent of philosophical skepticism: in this treatise, however, he stands forth as a theological polemicist, professing to defend the consensus of Catholic theologians against the view that pagans are incapable of genuine virtue. Pretty obviously, his target is Jansenius. But Le Vayer then shifts the discussion to the more thorny question of whether pagans can be saved, and whether, indeed, any we know of may have been saved. Though careful to maintain that no one can be saved without faith in Christ, he suggests that in general good pagans, who believe in one God, and live well according to the natural light of reason, might be credited by God with an "implicit" faith and saved through divine grace. But he then reviews a number of famous individuals to assess their chances of salvation. Those he discusses are all philosophers (if we count Julian the Apostate as a philosopher-emperor), and all from Greek or Roman antiquity, apart from Confucius.

Le Vayer's position is often extremely hard to pin down, because of his habit of arguing *in utramque partem*, and of qualifying the conclusions to which his argument seemed to be leading. His assessment of the Stoics is as balanced, or as equivocal, as that of most the schools or figures he discusses. His account of Zeno of Citium, and of the Stoics in general begins by stressing the proximity of Stoic and Christian ethics, and then proceeds to insist on their differences, as to the nature of God, for instance, or the immortality of the soul.

Commendation for the Stoic enthusiasm for virtue is undermined by criticism of their paradoxes (for instance, the equality of all virtues and vices, of all good actions and all wrong actions). The portrait of the Stoic sage is likewise condemned, especially Seneca's claims of his equality or superiority to God (Jupiter) (Seneca, *Ep.* 53). So is the view of suicide as legitimate. Yet Le Vayer distinguishes between Stoic teaching, as contrary to Christian faith, and Stoic behavior, often morally admirable (136–57). In the chapter on Seneca, he holds up to admiration the passage of *De ira* (3.36), where the philosopher describes his daily examination of conscience: what, he asks, could the best Christian do that is more agreeable to God (La Mothe Le Vayer 1647: 256–7)? (He is, none the less, pessimistic about Seneca's chances of salvation.)

A refutation was immediately produced by Antoine Arnauld, Jansenius's most dogged disciple. *De la nécessité de la foi en Jésus-Christ pour être sauvé* (On the necessity for salvation of faith in Jesus Christ) was not, however, published until 1701, held back, no doubt, by caution. Le Vayer had powerful protectors; most likely he was writing at the behest of Richelieu, who loathed Jansenius and his followers. Arnauld is not primarily concerned to discuss individual philosophers: far more important, he clearly sees, is the general claim that salvation might not require an explicit faith in Christ – for that way deism lies (Arnauld 1775–81: 321–2). He thus counters the claim that pagans might have attained a saving “implicit” faith by insisting on the radically different mental temper of the supposedly virtuous pagan and the Christian. Saving faith must involve humble repentance for sin, and what pagan could have held that attitude (89–108)? Seneca's daily examination of conscience was utterly different from the Christian kind: the Christian seeks to render an account of his deeds to God, Seneca to his own reason, which he has erected in the place of God. While the former is seeking to satisfy the divine justice, the latter cares only for gratifying his vanity; he is the only judge whose verdict matters to him (108). The moral maxims of the pagans are only “lessons in pride,” teaching them to depend only on themselves for their virtue and happiness (114). Arnauld observes with alarm that many contemporary Christians seem to think that the morality of the Scriptures is valid only for the cloister, and that the morality of Seneca and his like is more suitable to a gentleman (“honnête homme”) (129). It will be seen that here as elsewhere the attack on pagan virtue in general is essentially targeted at its Stoic version; Aristotle is not directly attacked, if only because, Christianized by Aquinas, his ethic had been so heavily incorporated into orthodoxy.

Arnauld was the theological spearhead of the spiritual and religious movement, centered on the female monastic community of Port-Royal, that came to be known as Jansenism; but its most famous member was Blaise Pascal. His interventions in moral philosophy are always governed by a theological agenda: and yet his reading in that area (intensive rather than extensive) shaped his theological vision. He saw Montaigne (whom he reads as a pure skeptic) and Epictetus as conveying contrary and indeed incommensurable truths, each of which highlights the failings of the other's philosophy. Epictetus teaches that all our efforts should be directed to identifying God's will and acting in accordance with it, and this is a far higher ethical ideal than Montaigne's complacent acquiescence in human inadequacy; at the same time Montaigne is entirely right to expose the incompetence of human reason, in which Epictetus's faith is misplaced. Taken together, they demonstrate what neither of them grasped individually: the combination of noble aspirations and chronic inability to fulfill them indicates that we are a fallen race (“Discussion with Monsieur de Sacy,” Pascal 2008: 182–92). In the *Pensées*, an unfinished and fragmentary apology for the Christian religion, Pascal sets out to discredit the claims of philosophy to produce happiness: it is clear that he has Stoicism in mind. As in the “Discussion” he argues that the Stoics greatly overestimate human ethical capacities and totally fail to recognize human corruption; and, moreover, that it is futile to

tell people to seek their happiness within when their every instinct drives them to seek it in something outside themselves (frs S 172–9).

But anti-Stoic neo-Augustinianism was not confined to the so-called Jansenists. The religious congregation known as the Oratory was another center of Augustinian influence. Jean-François Senault, Superior General of the Oratory from 1662 to his death in 1672, produced in 1641 an important treatise *On the Use of the Passions* which explicitly targets Stoicism (Senault 1641). Soul and body being intimately linked, the soul has to perform the same functions as the souls of animals; it therefore has animal appetites, and the movements of these appetites are the passions. It is therefore hopeless to attempt to get rid of them; but they can all be recruited to the service of virtue (2–9). There is some plausibility, indeed, in Stoic ethics, since the passions, in our present fallen state, are necessarily disordered: but they cannot be regulated by our natural powers alone; divine grace is necessary (65–79; cf. 134–5). Jacques Esprit (1611–77), who collaborated on the early drafts of La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*, was for a time attached to the Oratory. His own treatise *La Fausseté des vertus humaines* (Esprit 1996) was published posthumously in 1678: denouncing the hypocrisy of seventeenth-century courtiers, it also inveighs against the pagan philosophers. Clearly it is mainly the Stoics Esprit has in mind. These philosophers set up moral virtue as an idol, in place of God; they failed to realize that their underlying motivation was the desire for praise (75–6). Their cult of reason is in fact a kind of ruse on the part of human pride: a kind of compensation for its realization that the indulgence of the passions is an unreliable path to happiness (468–71). It leads us to believe that if we regulate our opinions properly, we can heal ourselves of all our passions (474). Plainly, there is an allusion here to the Stoic conception of the passions as false judgments. On this showing, our willpower suffices to enable us to be just and good (522): but this conception is quite illusory. In his *Maximes* of 1665–78, La Rochefoucauld (2001) is probably not advancing the same religious agenda as Esprit: he exhibits the disturbing omnipresence of self-love without ascribing it to original sin, or urging divine grace as the sole remedy; but his debt to his sometime friend is apparent in those few maxims where he specifically targets pagan philosophers: their indifference in the face of death was simply a “taste” on the part of their self-love (§46); their scorn for wealth was a strategy designed to compensate them for their lack of it (§54); their constancy in the face of death was motivated by concern for their posthumous reputation (§504). Again, it is clearly the Stoics who are meant: in fact the frontispiece of the first edition of the *Maximes* (reproduced in many modern editions) shows a putto playfully tearing the noble mask off a bust of Seneca to reveal the ugly face beneath. More generally, La Rochefoucauld's anti-Stoic remarks are part of a relentlessly argued demonstration of the incapacity of reason, virtue, and will power actually to influence behavior.

The social and cultural climate in which La Rochefoucauld was writing was hardly favorable to Stoicism. It was marked by a widespread sense of demoralization that seems to have followed the civil war known as the Fronde (1648–53), a rising by the higher magistrates (the *parlements*) and the aristocracy against the unpopular minister Cardinal Mazarin, chief adviser to the Queen Regent Anne of Austria during the minority of her son Louis XIV. Without a strong and coherent ideology or powerful common interest to unite them, the *frondeurs* (of whom La Rochefoucauld was one) fell apart in an atmosphere of mutual recrimination and resentment; and when in 1660 Louis XIV began his personal rule, he effectively asserted his power over both social groups. He did so not, however, by inculcating Stoic discipline as an ethos for the absolutist regime; far from it. He sought prestige through military conquest and lavish court entertainments; he won over the aristocracy by the appeal to pleasure and ambition. A Stoic observer, if any could be found, might have said that this was a culture in dire need of the

lessons of Stoicism; but the lessons were ignored or rejected. Many of the most important texts of the 1660s and 70s reflect a sense of the futility or precariousness of human aspirations and relationships: alongside La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*, Molière's darker comedies, Racine's tragedies, and Madame de Lafayette's novel *La Princesse de Clèves* all come to mind. But they all cast doubt on the possibility of attaining happiness by turning one's back on passion, and committing oneself to a life of reason and will power.

### Malebranche

We have seen how Descartes proclaimed that the ancients had nothing of value to teach us about the passions. His most important disciple, Malebranche (1638–1715) appears to share this skepticism. Like Descartes, he sees the passions as a necessary aspect of our embodied existence. Their function is to incline us to love our body and whatever tends to preserve it.<sup>4</sup> But this embodiment connects us with the whole order of nature, linking us in particular in a network of relationships with other people. This rather Stoic point is here used to demolish the Stoic pretension to moral independence (5.2, 117–18/341–2). Thus when a Stoic philosopher struggles against pain, what is happening is that he is subordinating his union with his body to his union with other human beings, those whose esteem he desires and in whose eyes he wishes to make a fine figure. He escapes slavery to his body by enslaving himself to other human beings via the passion for glory (119–20/342–3). The Stoics' denial that pleasure is good, pain evil simply runs counter to experience (5.4, 143/359). It is true that they experienced some joy by following the rules of their imaginary virtue, but it was not strong enough to enable them to overcome either pain or pleasure. What really sustained them in the face of those challenges was a secret pride, and the sense of being perceived by others (146–7/361). One would indeed expect Malebranche, an Oratorian, to echo this Augustinian criticism.

But it is not quite enough to say that he endorses St Augustine against the Stoics. Augustine discusses the Stoic view, as reported by Cicero in the fourth of the *Tusculan Disputations*, that the wise man experiences no passions (*perturbationes*), only well-ordered states (*eupatheiai*, *constantiae*): will in place of desire, gladness in place of joy, and caution in place of fear. But Augustine rejects this view, crediting both will, caution, and gladness on the one hand, and desire, fear, and joy on the other to good and bad people alike. The difference is simply that the good feel them in a good way, the bad in a bad way (*De civ. D.*, 14.8). Evaluation here depends on the will: if the person's will is good, the emotions will be good, and if bad they will be bad (14.6). But Malebranche would not put the matter in quite this way: for the passions, qua passions, are ethically defective, in that their goal is purely bodily: they have been given us purely for the sake of the body (*De la recherche de la vérité* 5.4, 143/359). But, as in Descartes, there are also non-passional, that is, intellectual emotions: like the joy, which the Stoics did after all experience, that naturally results from the soul's knowledge that it is in the state it ought to be in (5.4, 146/361). No doubt, this joy is fleeting and insubstantial unless reinforced by grace; but the point is that, here at least, in distinguishing intellectual emotions from passions in the strict sense, and valuing the former higher than the latter, Malebranche is closer to the Stoics (and to Descartes) than to St Augustine.

### Antoine Le Grand

A striking exception to this general discredit of Stoicism is provided by the Franciscan friar Antoine Le Grand: but he is perhaps the exception that proves the rule. For he was born in

Douai, now in France but then in the Spanish dominions. It was a center of the Catholic Reformation, with a strong presence of English refugees. It was in England, in fact, that Le Grand spent most of his adult life, and he exerted considerable influence through his Latin textbooks, presenting the Cartesian philosophy in a form suitable for use in educational institutions (Acworth 2004). In 1662 he published *Le sage des Stoïques*, with a dedication to Charles II; it is a vigorous defense of Stoicism against its contemporary critics, in a highly metaphorical style and with an arsenal of supporting quotations, mostly from Seneca (the metaphors are chiefly political, as when the mind is called upon to assert its sovereignty over potentially seditious appetites; 114). Virtue alone can be the supreme good: for nothing can be part of our happiness that is not in our power, and that does not depend purely on our will; indeed, there is no good besides virtue: if there were, we could not commit ourselves wholly to virtue because the two goods could conflict (60–2). Virtue involves not moderating but altogether eliminating passion (114–27) (a virtue assisted by passion would not be worthy of the name; 144). Passion itself is defined as an unnatural impulse, a movement of the soul against reason (85–6). That is, an initial impulse from the senses is transformed into passion when appropriated by opinion (that is, by a judgment of the goodness or badness of the object); and opinion is a simulacrum (“vaine peinture”) of reason, nothing more than the discourse of the majority (112). Desire, that is, has a doubly mimetic quality, being aroused by a kind of imitation reason and driving us to imitate others.

This is, however, of course a Christianized Stoicism: Le Grand insists on the freedom of the human will (175). In particular, he takes issue with the neo-Augustinians’ insistence on the corrupting influence of the fall and the resulting weakness of human nature. Too much stress on original sin and on the necessity for a grace given only to God’s favorites has unintentionally encouraged people to defend their faults and excuse their weakness. Our natural qualities are still sufficiently intact for us to be able to make the effort to overcome passion and practice virtue (25, 139); and he explicitly rejects the Augustinian condemnation of pagan virtue as inauthentic (65–74). Though he argues the Stoic case in *Le sage des Stoïques*, Le Grand was also prepared to uphold aspects of Epicureanism, as appears from his work *L’Épicure spirituel, ou L’Empire de la volupté sur les vertus* (1669). In any case, in his defense of Stoicism he was swimming against the current. Yet currents can change direction, and interest in Stoicism would revive in France in the following century, when the prestige of Augustinian theology declined.

## Notes

- 1 References to Montaigne are to book and chapter of the *Essais*, followed by the pagination of Montaigne 1992 (Villey-Saulnier) and then Montaigne 2003 (Screech).
- 2 *De la sagesse*, prefatory note to Bk 1, ch. 18, in Charron 1986: 153. Subsequent references are to book and chapter of *De la sagesse*, followed by the pagination of this edition.
- 3 References to Descartes are to the volumes and pages of Adam and Tannery’s edition (Descartes 1996), abbreviated to AT. The pagination of AT is reprinted in the margins of the English translation in Descartes (1984). In the case of *The Passions of the Soul*, however, references are given only to the number of the article.
- 4 Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité* (*The Search after Truth*) Bk 5, ch. 1 (Malebranche 2006: II 113; 1997: 338). Subsequent references are given by book and chapter number, followed by French and English page numbers in Malebranche 2006 and 1997 respectively.

## Further reading

An excellent general account of early modern ethical thought, including Neostoicism, is to be found in two chapters by Jill Kraye, “Moral Philosophy,” in C. Schmitt, Q. Skinner, and E. Kessler (eds), *The*

*Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 303–86, and “Conceptions of Moral Philosophy,” in D. Garber and M. Ayers (eds), *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1279–1316. In the second volume Susan James, “Reason, the Passions, and the Good Life” (pp. 1359–96) is very highly recommended, as, for a fuller treatment, is her *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). Anthony Levi’s erudite and comprehensive *French Moralists: The Theory of the Passions, 1585 to 1649* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) remains indispensable. Nannerl Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France* (Keohane 1980) covers a wide range of thinkers insightfully and in detail. R. A. Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne: A Critical Exploration* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972) is still a very valuable study of his work. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) has an important analysis of Descartes, which stresses his debt to Stoicism, Epictetus in particular. On Jansenism see Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes Us Nothing: A Brief Remark on Pascal’s Religion and on the Spirit of Jansenism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); also Michael Moriarty, *Early Modern French Thought: The Age of Suspicion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and *Fallen Nature, Fallen Selves: Early Modern French Thought II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

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# 15

## SPINOZA AND THE STOICS

*Jon Miller*

This volume attests to the extraordinarily long and fruitful legacy of Stoicism. Of those who can be connected to the Stoics, few have a relationship more fascinating and complicated than Spinoza (1632–77). It is beyond the scope of this brief chapter to examine fully all aspects of their relationship.<sup>1</sup> Instead, I will just try to justify my assertion that it is fascinating and complicated. I shall argue that what makes the relationship fascinating is just how Stoical the philosophical system crafted by Spinoza seems to be. The complications arise from the indifference Spinoza apparently had to the Stoic systems, which so greatly resembles his own. Let me now go through each of these claims.

### **The similarities between Stoicism and Spinozism**

A list of some conceptual affinities between the two systems may help to establish at least the plausibility of my claim that Spinozism is highly similar to Stoicism. Both systems advocated metaphysical monism, the thesis that all being is unified by and embedded in a single substance. Zeno is reported to have said that “the whole world and heaven are the substance of god” (Diog. Laert. 7.148).<sup>2</sup> Spinoza argued in his *Ethics* that “[e]xcept God, no substance can be or be conceived” (IP14).<sup>3</sup>

Both Stoics and Spinoza attributed enormous importance to the one substance which constitutes and unifies the universe. To cite but one example of its importance, the single substance is made to be the basic cause of all things. Seneca wrote, “We Stoics look for a primary and universal cause ... We ask what that cause is? To be sure, it is reason in action, that is, God” (*Ep.* 65.12).<sup>4</sup> Spinoza said, “All things that are, are in God, and must be conceived through God, and so God is the cause of those things” (IP18Dem).<sup>5</sup>

Mention of causation leads to another important congruence of thought. Stoics and Spinoza were rigid determinists. One source reports of the Stoics, “The things which happen first become causes to those which happen after them. In this way all things are bound together, and neither does anything happen in the world such that something else does not unconditionally follow from it and become causally attached to it, nor can any of the later events be severed from the preceding events so as not to follow from one of them.”<sup>6</sup> Spinoza wrote, “Every individual thing, i.e., anything whatever which is finite and has a determinate existence, cannot exist or be determined to act unless it be determined to exist and to act by

another cause” (IP28). For both Stoics and Spinoza, all objects and actions are effects necessitated by their causes. Both parties would like William James’s depiction of the universe as an “iron block,” wherein “those parts of the universe already laid down absolutely appoint and decree what the other parts shall be. The future has no ambiguous possibilities hidden in its womb: the part we call the present is compatible with only one totality. Any other future complement than the one fixed from eternity is impossible” (W. James 1956: 150).

Both Stoics and Spinoza explicitly affirm that human beings are part of the monistic, deterministic realm. Chrysippus said, “our own natures are parts of the nature of the whole” (Diog. Laert. 7.88). Spinoza wrote, “It is impossible for a man not to be part of Nature” (IVP4). I shall return to the implications of this in a moment.

Before I can get to those implications, I need to make another point regarding the similar metaphysical theories of the two parties. At the same time as Stoics and Spinoza advocate metaphysical monism with the accompanying thesis that the one thing has supreme causal efficacy, they do not eliminate the phenomena of ordinary experience. Horses, the planet Earth, Winston Churchill and other objects of our day-to-day lives are real; they are situated in a causal stream, which ensures that they have causal efficacy even as they are being caused to act. Spinoza called such beings modifications of the one substance or, more simply, “modes.”<sup>7</sup> Stoics did not have a technical term equivalent to Spinoza’s “modes” but it is clear they were equally determined to preserve individual beings’ reality and power.<sup>8</sup>

So humans are real parts of nature. They are also embedded in a causal order which fully determines all their thoughts and actions. This leads to an obvious problem: how can humans have any autonomy, any capacity to direct their own lives in ways that reflect their own desires and values? Stoics and Spinoza were both sensitive to this problem; they devoted enormous effort to solving it. I cannot begin to explain their solutions here.<sup>9</sup> Instead, I will just quote two texts which show that neither Stoics nor Spinoza took determinism to be incompatible with freedom or autonomy. In a letter written at the end of his life Spinoza said, “the fatalistic necessity of all things and actions” forms “the principal basis of all the contents of the [*Ethics*]” (Letter 75). He argues, “this inevitable necessity of things does not do away with either divine or human laws ... [W]hether the good that follows from virtue ... emanates from the necessity of the divine nature, it will not on that account be more or less desirable” (ibid.). On the Stoic side, they believed that although everything is fated to occur exactly as it does, it is not the case that “the bestowal of privilege and correction do not exist. But if this is so, all the things mentioned remain, even if all things come about in accordance with fate – right and wrong actions, honours, punishments, bestowals of privilege, commendations and censures.”<sup>10</sup>

Let us leave metaphysics behind. While Stoics and Spinoza devoted enormous attention to problems of metaphysics and epistemology, both parties would have regarded the work which they undertook in those domains as ultimately justified by the practical rewards it had to offer. In the Preface to Part II of his *Ethics*, Spinoza says that he will proceed to deduce only those conclusions from Part I which “can lead us as it were by the hand to the knowledge of the human mind and its utmost blessedness.” Likewise, the Stoic protagonist in Cicero’s *De finibus* argues that one has to study physics only because knowledge of physics will help one live a better life: “one cannot make correct judgements about good and evil unless one understands the whole system of nature ... Those ancient precepts of the wise that bid us to ‘respect the right moment,’ ‘follow god,’ ‘know oneself’ and ‘do nothing in excess’ cannot be grasped in their full force without a knowledge of physics” (*Fin.* 3.73; Cicero 2001: 88).

So study of theoretical issues makes sense only insofar as it has practical benefits.<sup>11</sup> Stoics and Spinoza also thought there was a goal to all philosophizing, whether about theoretical or practical matters. They conceived of this goal in very similar terms.

By understanding the nature of the universe and our place in it, Stoics and Spinoza both thought we could attain the highest state of perfection possible. Both parties think of reason or understanding as constituting our essence or nature. Seneca said, “What is the peculiar characteristic of a man? Reason” (*Ep.* 76.10).<sup>12</sup> Echoing this, Spinoza called “the understanding” the “better part of us” (IVApp32).<sup>13</sup> Since reason or understanding is our true nature, striving to make our reason or understanding as good as we can is the best way to improve ourselves. In the letter just quoted Seneca writes, “What is best in man? Reason: with this he precedes the animals and follows the gods. Therefore perfect reason is man’s peculiar good, the rest he shares with animals and plants” (*Ep.* 76.9). Spinoza mounts a very similar argument. Because “man’s power” is his reason, “it is especially useful to perfect [in life], as far as we can, our intellect, or [*sive*] reason. In this one thing consists man’s highest happiness, or [*sive*] blessedness” (IVApp3–4).

Since Stoics and Spinoza thought of reason or understanding as our true essence or nature, and because they took the perfection of reason or understanding to be the greatest good that we could possibly achieve, they were critical of anything which blocked the improvement of our reason. For both parties, the greatest danger here was posed by the emotions or passions (I will use the words interchangeably). According to Stobaeus, the Stoics “say that passion is impulse which is excessive and disobedient to the dictates of reason, or a movement of soul which is irrational and contrary to nature.”<sup>14</sup> Because passions make us act contrary to nature, they ought to be eliminated. For his part, Spinoza offers this as a definition of the word “bondage”: “man’s lack of power to control and check the emotions” (IVPref). Since we are in bondage when we fail to control our emotions, it seems that emotions are states of mind requiring control if we are not to be in bondage, and so free. Indeed, control of the emotions is the very key to freedom and happiness. In IVP34 Spinoza argues that all bondage and unhappiness occurs when “men are assailed by emotions that are passive.” By contrast, Spinoza contends in IVP35 that freedom and happiness happen when and only when “men live under the guidance of reason.”

Notice the qualification in IVP34: Spinoza speaks of emotions *that are passive*. He distinguishes two types of emotions: passive versus active.<sup>15</sup> The passive emotions are the dangerous ones, for when we experience them, we are not in control. Active emotions are not dangerous; in fact, they are healthy. As he writes, “Our active emotions, that is, those desires that are defined by man’s power, that is, by reason, are always good” (IVApp3). Stoicism advances the same distinction between unhealthy and healthy emotions. Diogenes Laertius writes, “[The Stoics] say that there are three good feelings: joy, watchfulness, wishing. Joy, they say, is the opposite of pleasure, consisting in well-reasoned swelling; and watchfulness is the opposite of fear, consisting in well-reasoned shrinking. For the wise man will not be afraid at all, but he will be watchful. They say that wishing is the opposite of appetite, consisting in well-reasoned [desire]” (Diog. Laert. 7.116). Both Stoics and Spinoza believe that the ideal moral agent, the sage or the free man, will experience emotions, all of which will be of the healthy sort.

To be sure, Spinoza and the Stoics did not agree on everything. One source of disagreement concerns an issue previously mentioned. While Stoics were determinists, they nevertheless strove to find a place for genuine human agency in the face of that determinism. A way to express this idea is that Stoics thought we could have some kind of control over our decisions.<sup>16</sup> Our control is not contra-causal, for we cannot act against the causes forcing us in

the direction which we are going. Rather, we have control in the sense that “it depends on you, on the kind of person you are, whether you give assent” (Frede 2011: 81). Spinoza would have no patience for such a subtle position. He bluntly declares, “The will cannot be called a free cause, but only a necessary one” (IP32).<sup>17</sup>

Another major source of disagreement would be over cosmic teleology, the thesis that the universe has an end or purpose, and divine providence, the thesis that the universe is arranged by God to benefit human beings. These ideas were central to Stoicism.<sup>18</sup> They were also completely rejected by Spinoza.<sup>19</sup>

Those differences notwithstanding, there is much that is deeply Stoical about Spinoza’s thought. Scholars have been saying as much for centuries. For example, in an essay possibly written while Spinoza was still alive, Leibniz described Spinoza as leading a “sect of new Stoics” which held that “things act because of [the universe’s] power and not due to a rational choice.”<sup>20</sup> In his famous *Dictionary*, Pierre Bayle wrote that “[t]he doctrine of the world-soul, which was ... the principal part of the system of the Stoics, is at bottom the same as Spinoza’s.”<sup>21</sup> In the third edition of his *New Science*, Vico argues that because they made “God an infinite mind, subject to fate, in an infinite body,” the Stoics were “the Spinozists of their day.”<sup>22</sup> Leibniz, Bayle and Vico are but three of those who have been struck by how Stoical Spinoza was. There are many others, ranging from Spinoza’s day to our own. Rather than go through them,<sup>23</sup> I want to bring this section to a close with a question.

Suppose we grant that Spinoza conceived of the world and our place in it in terms which the Stoics would find congenial. Question: how did this happen? How did he arrive at his Stoic worldview? I will address that question, which I shall call the “how question,” in the remaining sections of the chapter.

### Spinoza’s interest in Stoicism

One possibility is that Spinoza arrived at his Stoic worldview as a result of careful study of Stoic texts and doctrines. Given the great similarities between the two systems, this may seem all but obvious. Such a view has been argued many times in print. Thus Susan James has written, “much of the substance and structure of the *Ethics* – its central doctrines and the connections between them – constitute ... a reworking of Stoicism” (S. James 1993: 291). Others would agree with James.<sup>24</sup>

For my part, I am not convinced. It is not that I think James and others are wrong; rather, it is that I cannot find much evidence they are right. When we look at the evidence, I find only mild indications of interest on Spinoza’s behalf in Stoicism. Since there are only mild indications of interest, it is hard for me to believe he was hugely influenced by his ancient predecessors.

As I prepare to discuss this claim, I must grant that it is hard to measure how someone has an interest in something. I like the way Jacob Adler describes the options when he considers a parallel problem. Where my problem is determining Spinoza’s interest in the Stoics, Adler’s problem is knowing the “works that Spinoza read or knew or is likely to have read or known” (Adler 2014: 15). Regarding this problem Adler writes, “Some scholars maintain a very strict standard, and will not admit that Spinoza was influenced by anything unless there is documentary evidence to that effect. Others assume that Spinoza was familiar with the whole body of previous philosophical literature” (ibid.). For his part, Adler attempts “to steer a middle course: I will not assume, without evidence or argument, that Spinoza knew or was influenced by a particular text. But the evidence or argument need not be conclusive; it is

worth exploring possibilities that seem highly likely, though not absolutely certain” (ibid.). When it comes to Spinoza’s interest in the Stoics, I shall also steer a similar middle course: I will insist upon documentary evidence of his interest but I will allow the evidence to be both *explicit* and *implicit* engagements with Stoicism. More concretely, I will use as evidence of Spinoza’s interest in Stoicism either (1) that he owned Stoic texts or (2) that he engaged with Stoic figures and concepts in his writings.

There is one piece of evidence that I will disregard. It is the similarity of the two systems. Since I am seeking to explain how Spinoza formulated a worldview that is so Stoical, I cannot cite the similarity of the two systems to show how this happened. To do so would beg the very question which I am asking.

Let me go through (1) and (2) from the paragraph above. Regarding (1), there was a record made of the books in Spinoza’s library upon his death.<sup>25</sup> Of the nearly 400 items in the library, 4 were by Stoics: 3 by Seneca and 1 by Epictetus.<sup>26</sup> The renowned historian of philosophy Alan Gabbey has argued “the *proportionate* holding in a given domain is normally an index of the [library] owner’s interest in that domain” (Gabbey 1996: 149). If we agree with Gabbey, then the scarcity of Stoic texts in Spinoza’s library is one sign of his lack of interest in classical Stoicism.<sup>27</sup>

Of course, that is just one gauge of his interest. What about the other – his engagement with Stoicism? Spinoza explicitly mentions “the Stoics” twice in his writings: once in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and once in the *Ethics*.<sup>28</sup> Spinoza also names a specific Stoic at least three times. The Stoic whom he names is Seneca; he is named once in the *Ethics* and twice in the *Theological-Political Treatise*.<sup>29</sup> It is more contentious to mark implicit engagements with Stoicism, places where Spinoza draws upon or argues with Stoics but fails to acknowledge that he does so. One place where this seems to be happening is IVApp32:

But human power is very limited and is infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes, and so we do not have absolute power to adapt to our purposes things external to us. However, we shall patiently bear whatever happens to us that is contrary to what is required by consideration of our own advantage, if we are conscious that we have done our duty and that our power was not extensive enough for us to have avoided the said things, and that we are a part of the whole of Nature whose order we follow. If we clearly and distinctly understand this, that part of us which is defined by the understanding, that is, the better part of us, will be fully resigned and will endeavour to persevere in that resignation. For insofar as we understand, we can desire nothing but that which must be, nor, in an absolute sense, can we find contentment in anything but truth. And so insofar as we rightly understand these matters, the endeavour of the better part of us is in harmony with the order of the whole of Nature.

Even though Spinoza does not speak of the Stoics, this passage has been called “transparently and profoundly Stoic” (Long 2003: 14).<sup>30</sup> If so, then it would be a case where Spinoza implicitly engages with Stoicism.<sup>31</sup>

When he mentions “the Stoics,” alludes to Seneca, or implicitly engages with Stoicism, Spinoza is always making a substantial point. Given that Spinoza takes the Stoics seriously whenever he brings them up, it is reasonable to conclude that he thought of Stoicism as a serious philosophy. At the same time as Spinoza treats Stoicism seriously when he discusses it, the foregoing instances are the only ones where he mentions or engages with Stoicism. Even for a man known to be parsimonious with his references to the work of others, five times in his entire corpus is not a lot. Evidently, he was not overly preoccupied with the Stoic system.

Suppose the foregoing is correct. What does it imply? Inter alia, I think it shows there is not much evidence of Spinoza's interest in Stoicism. It also shows, I think, that he was not greatly influenced by Stoicism. If this is true, then we are still faced with the "how question" stated at the end of the last section. How did Spinoza achieve his Stoic worldview? If it was not under the influence of the Stoics, then how did this happen? I will offer an answer in the last section of the chapter.

### **How Spinoza formulated a Stoic system**

Spinoza may not have been a Stoic but he did formulate a system which is reminiscent of Stoicism. I have just argued that we have no evidence to suppose this happened as a result of an intense study of Stoicism. Since we cannot look to influence for an answer to the "how question," let us consider a different possibility.

Everything depends on the starting point. If a philosopher makes certain initial suppositions, then there are limitations on the overall worldview which he or she will eventually craft, if he or she is able to craft a worldview. In the case of Stoics and Spinoza, they both make the same (or nearly so) initial suppositions. In the first section above I indicated what those suppositions are. Since Stoics and Spinoza make the same (or nearly so) initial suppositions, the systems which they craft are the same (or nearly so).

Spinoza did not derive his monism under the influence of Stoicism; he did not become a determinist because of Stoicism; he did not deny humans a privileged place in the universe as a result of Stoicism. The same is true for the other basic building blocks of Spinozism, such as mind-body parallelism or the *conatus* doctrine. Spinoza formulated these theses after much hard work. This work included studying the works of others, including some Stoics. Still, there was never a straight line from somebody else's work to an element of Spinoza's. He was too creative, too brilliant, to be content with such regurgitation. He may have learned from others but he always put his own print on his ideas. His reasons for holding and defending these positions are found in the arguments that he advances for them.

Once Spinoza had formulated these theses, "the rational constraints on ethics" (to quote A. A. Long) led him to concoct a normative framework which was so Stoical. As Long writes (2003: 15):

If one posits strict determinism, the dependence of everything on a single, intelligent causal principle, the physical extension of that principle everywhere, the self-preservative drive of all creatures, the ideal conformity of human nature to rationality and understanding, the incompatibility of happiness with servitude to passions and dependence on worldly contingencies; and if one also believes, as Spinoza and the Stoics did, that a mind perfectly in tune with nature has a logical structure that coheres with the causal sequence of events – if one believes all these things and follows up their implications, the rational constraints on ethics will lead one to a ground shared by Spinoza and the Stoics: a denial of free will (in the sense of facing an open future), an acceptance of the way things are, and an interest in cultivating the understanding as the only basis for achieving virtue, autonomy, and emotional satisfaction.

That is how, in sum, I think we ought to answer the "how question."

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank John Sellars for inviting me to write this chapter. I am grateful for the opportunity to think about the Stoics and Spinoza, just as I am grateful for the patience he showed while I was writing it.

## Notes

- 1 In Miller 2015, I offer a book-length treatment of the relationship. As I admit in my Introduction, however, “much work [on Spinoza’s relationship to the Stoics] will remain even after my book is finished” (16).
- 2 Cf. Marcus Aurelius 4.40. Unless otherwise noted, all Stoic translations come from LS (Long and Sedley).
- 3 Unless otherwise noted, all Spinoza translations come from Shirley, trans., *The Complete Works* (Spinoza 2002). When referring to the *Ethics*, I will employ these abbreviations: Roman numerals for Part numbers; App, Appendix; D (plus an Arabic numeral), Definition; Dem, Demonstration; Sch (plus an Arabic numeral where appropriate), Scholium; P (plus an Arabic numeral), Proposition; Pref, Preface. So IP14 means “Part I, Proposition 14,” and IVP20Sch would mean “Part IV, Proposition 20, Scholium.”
- 4 Translation (slightly modified) from Inwood 2007.
- 5 Translation slightly modified.
- 6 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato* 192,3–6 (LS 55N).
- 7 See the official definition of Mode, ID5, as well as the discussion of the mode’s ontological status and powers beginning in IP21.
- 8 See e.g. Cicero, *Fat.* 39–44. Stoic discussion of the reality and efficacy of individual members of the universe centers on human beings. In this way, their discussion of this issue is narrower than Spinoza’s, whose discussion of this issue is completely general, not oriented in any way to humans. Still, I think the two analyses are parallel.
- 9 There are many excellent discussions of these issues. The best and most exhaustive account of Stoicism is Bobzien 1998. For Spinoza, see Kisner 2011: ch. 3.
- 10 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato* 207,18–21 (LS 62J).
- 11 I am omitting many complications here. For an excellent discussion of the Stoics, see Inwood 2009. For Spinoza, see the Introduction to Kisner 2011.
- 12 See also Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.16.
- 13 See also IVApp5 and VPref.
- 14 Stob. 2,88,8–9 WH (LS 65A).
- 15 For the active emotions, see IIIP58 and 59.
- 16 Once again, I am eliding many difficulties here.
- 17 For more on Spinoza’s thoughts here, including how he thinks freedom is compatible with determinism, see Kisner 2011: 18–23.
- 18 See e.g. Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*, Cicero, *Nat. D.* 2.37–8, and Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1050c–d.
- 19 See esp. IApp. Spinoza is especially targeting divine providence taken as expressing the inscrutable will of an unknowable God. If divine providence can be construed in different terms, then Spinoza might respond to it differently.
- 20 The excerpt comes from an untitled paper thought to be written by Leibniz between 1677 and 1680 (trans. in Leibniz 1989: 281ff.).
- 21 Bayle 1740: article on Spinoza, entry “A” (my translation).
- 22 Vico 1948: 87 (§335).
- 23 For more on them, see Miller 2015: 1–2.
- 24 See e.g. Dilthey 1977: 285; Kristeller 1984: 5; Rorty 1996: 338.
- 25 See the edition published in Alter 1965.
- 26 Of the three by Seneca, two were editions of his *Letters* and one an edition of his *Tragedies*.
- 27 I deliberately include the adjective “classical” here, to distinguish classical Stoicism from Neostoicism or the work of Stoics living in Spinoza’s era. He did own pieces by Lipsius and Grotius, among others, which does complicate his relationship to Stoicism. For more on Spinoza’s Neostoic works, see Miller 2015: 16–23. In this paper, I am concentrating on Spinoza’s relationship to the classical or ancient Stoics.

- 28 See §74 in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and *Ethics* VPref.  
29 See *Ethics* IVP20Sch and *Theological-Political Treatise*, chs 5 and 16.  
30 Others who agree with Long include Matheron 1999 and Rutherford 1999: 457.  
31 This is the most prominent example of Spinoza's implicitly engaging with Stoicism but it may not be the only one. I consider another possibility in Miller 2015: 134–6.

## Further reading

For a detailed study of the parallels between Spinoza and the Stoics see Miller (2015), which includes references to previous literature on the topic. Among these, especially noteworthy are Graeser (1991), S. James (1993), Matheron (1999) and Long (2003). The only other book-length study in English is DeBrabander (2007).

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# 16

## LEIBNIZ AND THE STOICS

### Fate, freedom, and providence

*David Forman*

#### **Against “the sect of the new Stoics”**

In an essay dated to the late 1670s, Leibniz declares his allegiance to Socrates and to the Plato of the *Phaedo* against the modern revival of the Stoic and the Epicurean sects. The Epicurean materialism of Hobbes represents an obvious danger to piety, but Leibniz claims that the “sect of the new Stoics” led by Spinoza (and, by implication, Descartes) is no less dangerous. Although the new Stoics reject materialism, they nevertheless assert “a mechanical necessity in all things” that rules out final causes or purposes in the world. On such a view, God could not be a transcendent, wise governor who chooses what is best, but at most a “blind” power immanent within the world (G VII 333; AG 282).<sup>1</sup> This complaint reflects an old worry about the Stoics, having appeared, for example, in late antiquity in Boethius and in modern times in Bramhall.<sup>2</sup> Leibniz would have been familiar with a version of the worry as articulated by Jacob Thomasius (his former teacher in Leipzig).<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, in criticizing the advocates of predestination among his contemporaries, Leibniz complains that they speak “as the Stoics do about fate” insofar as they maintain an “absolute necessity” arising out of the nature of the world itself (*ex natura rei*) that thereby subjects even God to fate (A IV.vii 508).

#### **Metaphysical rationalism: the identity of indiscernibles and the “Stoic connectedness”**

Leibniz is justified in associating such a necessitarianism with Stoicism to the extent that the ancient Stoics, quite unlike the Platonists, claim “all things happen by fate” (Diog. Laert. 7.149) such that ‘necessity’ (*anangkē*) serves for Chrysippus as a synonym for the divine, active principle of the universe.<sup>4</sup> But despite siding with Plato against the new Stoics regarding the “necessity” of things, Leibniz’s thought has a deep affinity with Stoicism on account of his commitment to the principle of sufficient reason: for both Leibniz and the Stoics *nihil fieri sine causa*.<sup>5</sup>

Leibniz is well known for drawing the controversial conclusion from this principle that no two things can be alike in all respects (or that no two things can differ in number alone). This is the principle of the identity of indiscernibles or “Leibniz’s Law”: “For it certainly must be possible to explain why [two things] are different, and that explanation must derive from

some difference they contain.”<sup>6</sup> A parallel principle can be found in the Stoic view that all distinct individuals are “peculiarly qualified” (*idios poion*) as such. For both Leibniz and the Stoics, there would be something irrational about a world in which there would be no way to explain what makes two things different in terms of their own natures. Whereas Leibniz requires that God be able to distinguish individuals qua mere *possibilia* in his intellect,<sup>7</sup> the Stoics insist that it is the sage who must be able to distinguish any two individuals in terms of individuating qualities.<sup>8</sup> Cicero’s Academic spokesman ridicules the Stoics for thinking that everything is *sui generis* since that leads them to their implausible view that “no strand of hair in the world is just like another, nor any grain of sand.”<sup>9</sup> Leibniz seems to be in a better position to resist this implausible implication on account of his view that the objects of human experience are merely “well-regulated phenomena.”<sup>10</sup> But Leibniz instead enthusiastically embraces the implication, even suggesting that it provides empirical corroboration for the identity of indiscernibles: “for never do we find two eggs or leaves or two blades of grass in a garden that are perfectly similar.”<sup>11</sup>

The Stoics were not the first to appeal to something like the principle of sufficient reason. It can be seen playing a role in the cosmological views of the pre-Socratics Parmenides and Anaximander.<sup>12</sup> But it is the Stoics who embrace its application even to the minutest details of human life.<sup>13</sup> For the Stoics, *all* things are connected in single causal nexus that they called a chain (*heirmos*) of fate (*heirmarmenē*).<sup>14</sup> On this view, everything is knowable ahead of time, at least in principle. Accordingly, many Stoics, including Chrysippus, apparently accepted the reality of divination.<sup>15</sup> And Leibniz, too, allows that prophecy is in principle consistent with his system, namely because “the present is pregnant with the future” and because of the “perfect interconnection of things.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed:

That everything is brought about through a determined destiny [*ein festgestelltes verhängniß*] is as certain as three times three being nine. For destiny consists in the fact that everything is connected together [*an einander hängen*] as in a chain and that everything just as infallibly *will* happen, before it happens, as it infallibly *has* happened when it happens ... so that if someone could have sufficient insight into the internal components of things – and also enough memory and understanding to perceive all the circumstances and include them in his calculations – he would be a prophet who could see the future in the present just as if in a mirror. ... [T]he whole future world is hidden and perfectly prefigured in the present world since no chance can come to it from without, for there is nothing outside of it.<sup>17</sup>

Leibniz thus appears to accept the reality of fate as defined by Chrysippus, namely (as Leibniz puts it in 1710) “the inevitable and eternal connection of all events” (*Theodicy* §332).<sup>18</sup> Christian August Crusius (1715–75) thus remarks aptly that Leibniz’s principle of sufficient reason “introduces fate anew,” namely the “immutable entanglement of all things” of the sort asserted by the Chrysippus and other ancients (Crusius 1743).<sup>19</sup>

The rationalism inherent in the Stoic view implies that things are not fated “simply” or independently of other things, but rather as part of a whole causal nexus: Chrysippus holds that “everything comes about by fate according to antecedent causes” (Cicero, *Fat.* 41; LS 62C5). And for the Stoics, this connectedness implies not just that all things stand in *some* chain of causes or other, but rather that all things are linked together in a *single* “web” of fate.<sup>20</sup> The Stoic account of this web of fate is bound up with their view that the single divine principle is the reason and the fiery breath (*pneuma, spiritus*) that pervades the world in all its parts. According to this Stoic cosmobiology, the divine principle is the “world soul”

that animates and unifies the whole cosmos in such a way that all its parts stand in a relationship of mutual “sympathy.” Cicero thus attributes to the Stoics a picture of the “sympathy, conspiring, and unbroken affinity of all things” (*tanta rerum consentiens conspirans continuata cognatio*) (*Nat. D.* 2.19). The general features of this account of a universal harmony among creatures are not particularly Stoic; its essential elements can be found in Plato and (according to ancient sources) the Pythagoreans.<sup>21</sup> What is distinctly Stoic is the marriage of this account of the interconnectedness of things with the rationalism that interprets this interconnectedness as a universal causal inter-determinism.

Leibniz too upholds not just causal determinism, but also this universal *interconnectedness*: “all things are connected in each one of the possible worlds: the universe, whatever it may be, is all of one piece, like an ocean” (*Theodicy* §9).<sup>22</sup> It is in this sense that Leibniz tells us that the true metaphysics embraces the “Stoic connectedness” (*la connexion Stoïcienne*).<sup>23</sup> Leibniz even echoes the Stoic cosmobiology when he says that “everything conspires [*sumpnoia panta*] in the universe, as Hippocrates says of the human body.”<sup>24</sup> As on the Stoic view, this interconnectedness has a theological basis: every created substance “is like a complete world and like a mirror of God or of the whole universe, which each one expresses in its own way.”<sup>25</sup> Leibniz is even willing to acknowledge (at least in an early text) that the underlying principle here that “God is diffused through everything” has something in common with the Stoics’ “establishing God as the substance of the world.”<sup>26</sup> But Leibniz is of course unwilling to follow the Stoics in explaining the interconnection of things in terms of an *immanent*, let alone a material, God. Indeed, on Leibniz’s mature view, the interconnection of things is not even one of *direct* causal influence, since each substance is “a world apart, being independent of all other things, except for God,”<sup>27</sup> such that the harmony of all things is “pre-established.” In that respect, his mature account of the interconnection of creatures in terms of their common divine source appears instead to be Platonist in inspiration.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, Leibniz’s own account of interconnection remains more Stoic in one essential respect: since God’s decree reaches even to the minutest details of things, their interconnection is characterized not merely by a *general* orderliness or harmony, but also by the complete co-fatedness of all things: “there is a perfect [i.e. complete] interconnection between things, no matter how distant they are from one another, so that someone who is sufficiently acute could read the one from the other.”<sup>29</sup>

### Against indeterminist freedom

In the passage where Leibniz affirms the “Stoic connectedness,” he adds that this connectedness can be taken to be “compatible with the spontaneity held to by others.”<sup>30</sup> That qualification seems to imply that the Stoics themselves lack an adequate account of the spontaneity required for moral responsibility. But, in fact, Leibniz is not willing, any more than the Stoics, to make exceptions to his determinism for the sake of human freedom.

In the face of the apparently common-sense view that some things happen merely by chance without any determinate cause,<sup>31</sup> the Stoics assert that when we say that something happens by “chance” (*tuchê*), there is in fact a determinate cause that is “non-evident to human calculation.”<sup>32</sup> Leibniz agrees. The thought that the future itself is uncertain arises when people mistake their lack of knowledge of minor causes for a knowledge of a lack of causes. In this way, they “imagine that things happen through chance [*ohnegefahr*] and not destiny,” for example that “the numbers on dice come up by chance.” Like the Stoics, Leibniz concludes that the difference between fate and chance exists not in fact but only in our understanding.<sup>33</sup>

Leibniz is equally unwilling to make exceptions to the rationalist principle when it comes to the particular case of human actions and decisions. For Leibniz, the human will is always determined by an inclination or motive consisting in a representation of what would be best to do. To suppose that we could act without being determined in this way would be to suppose that our future actions “have the privilege of exemption” from the principle of sufficient reason (*Theodicy* §45). This would be the “indifference of equipoise” (or “of equilibrium”: *indifférence d'équilibre*) of de Molina and his followers, which supposes that motives do not determine the will, that if all motives or inclinations were equally balanced in the mind, the agent could still choose a course of action (§46–8).<sup>34</sup> For Leibniz it is impossible in the real world for motives to be truly equally balanced in this way since the universe cannot be divided in half “so that all is equal and alike on both sides” (§49); we seem to find ourselves in such cases only because of our imperfect knowledge (§46).<sup>35</sup> But the main point is that the freedom imagined to lie in such indifference is “chimerical” (§45) and a “fiction” because it would lack a cause.<sup>36</sup>

Something like the freedom of the “indifference of equipoise” was proposed in antiquity, and Chrysippus’s Stoic response anticipates Leibniz’s own in a striking way, even illustrating our ignorance of causes with the same example of dice.<sup>37</sup> Leibniz may well have worked out the main contours of his view on this matter independently of Stoic sources. However, Leibniz is also willing to side with the Stoics against their adversaries when these ancient debates are brought to his attention by Pierre Bayle in his *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (which started appearing 1696; see Bayle 1734–38) and in the subsequent *Reply to the Questions of a Provincial*. For example, Note U of Bayle’s *Dictionary* entry on Epicurus, contains a lengthy extract from Cicero’s *De fato* 22–5 (in LS 20E) regarding alternatives to Chrysippus’s Stoic conception of fate. In Leibniz’s own comment on Bayle, he shares, or rather amplifies, Cicero’s dismissive attitude toward the swerve of Epicurus and Lucretius, calling it a “comical” self-contradiction (*Theodicy* §321). But Leibniz faults Cicero (and Bayle) for taking Carneades’s revision to be an improvement: it merely obscures the same absurdity of the swerve by transferring the uncaused motion from the body to the soul “where it is easier to confuse matters ... as if the great principle which states that nothing comes to pass without cause only related to the body” (*Theodicy* §322; cf. §§308, 135).<sup>38</sup> Carneades’s alternative seems absurd to Leibniz because he assumes with Chrysippus that an indifferent mind could not cause any motions.

### The idle argument

A different sort of objection to the Stoic conception of fate is represented by the ancient “idle argument” (*argos logos, ignava ratio*), which Leibniz calls the “lazy sophism” or “lazy reason” (*le sophisme paresseux, la raison paresseuse*). Leibniz discusses the idle argument in texts from throughout his career, in each case to similar effect.<sup>39</sup> In Leibniz’s rendering, the argument concludes: “if the future is necessary [then] that which must happen will happen, whatever I may do” (*Theodicy*, Preface, G VI 30; H 54; see §55). Chrysippus’s response to the argument as recounted in Cicero’s *De fato* 28–30 (in LS 55S) is the only extant ancient source that provides a refutation of the argument attributed to a particular person or school.<sup>40</sup> Since Leibniz identifies the argument by name, it is probable that he is at least indirectly familiar with Cicero’s presentation and Chrysippus’s response.

The idle argument as presented by Cicero concludes that there would never be any point in undertaking any action, for example in calling a doctor when sick, since “if it is fated for you to recover from this disease, then you will recover whether you call in a doctor or do

not” (*Fat.* 28). But on the Stoic view, my death will be fated *together with* the particular causes that will lead to my death. Chrysippus is therefore correct that the Stoics can deny the premise that if I am fated to survive the disease, I will survive *whether or not I call the doctor*.<sup>41</sup>

In the preface to the *Theodicy*, Leibniz tells us that refuting the idle argument will be an essential part of his account of freedom in that work (G VI 37; H 61); and indeed it is the first topic he discusses in regard to the question of the free and the necessary in the origin of human evil (G VI 29–30; H 53–4). Leibniz’s refutation itself does not differ much from that attributed to Chrysippus: he denies not the immutability of fate, but rather that things are fated *simply*: “that the thing will happen, whatever I do.”<sup>42</sup> Instead: “the effect being certain, the cause that shall produce it is certain also; ... We see, therefore, that the *connection of causes with effects*, far from causing an unendurable fatality, provides rather a means of obviating it” (*Theodicy* §55). Leibniz adds that this (Chrysippean) response to the idle argument fits with his own distinction between hypothetical and absolute necessity: because the predetermination of my punishment presupposes my will to sin, the necessity of my punishment is called “conditional” or “hypothetical” (G VI 380–1; H 381–2).<sup>43</sup>

Leibniz notes in this context that “what is called the *Fatum Stoicum* was not so black as it is painted: it did not divert men from the care of their affairs” (*Theodicy*, Preface, G VI 30; H 54). However, Leibniz does not mean thereby to acquit the Stoics of attributing an absolute necessity to things: Leibniz also denies that Spinoza and Hobbes would be vulnerable to the idle argument; indeed, he denies that their views rob human beings of authentic agency or even of all freedom (§§67, 71).<sup>44</sup> An absolute necessity would rob us only of the kind of freedom underwriting the ultimate sort of responsibility that makes us liable to *punitive*, as opposed to merely corrective, punishments (as well as to corresponding rewards) (§77).

### Future contingents

For Leibniz, although it is certain that I *shall* choose according to my preponderant motive, nothing *necessitates* me to so choose since that choice is not absolutely (or geometrically or metaphysically) necessary: the unchosen alternative remains possible for me in the sense that neither my choice by itself, nor the whole world that is inseparable from that choice, is necessary by its own nature. Leibniz famously articulates this contingency in terms of a metaphysics of unactualized possible worlds – something clearly foreign to anything in Stoicism.<sup>45</sup> Despite this, Leibniz sees the Stoics as aiming at a *desideratum* of his own, namely an account of the “third course” (not allowed by Bayle) between the indifference of equipoise of the Jesuits and the absolute necessity of the Jansenists and Calvinists (*Theodicy* §370–1) and thus an account of God’s decrees that can “keep the mean between geometrical truths, absolutely necessary, and arbitrary decrees” (*Theodicy*, Preface, G VI 37; H 61). Leibniz thus tells us that Chrysippus “sought a middle course”; the ancient Stoics “were at the same time in favor of determination and against necessity, although they were accused of attaching necessity to everything” (§331; cf. Cicero, *Fat.* 39).

Leibniz’s presentation of the Stoic view on future contingents (in *Theodicy* §170) is unusual in that it consists in a brief comment following upon a very long extract from Bayle’s *Dictionary* (from Note S of the entry on Chrysippus) that itself includes Bayle’s own lengthy extract from Cicero’s *De fato* (from 12–13, in LS 38E), supplemented by other ancient texts. The Cicero passage in question relates Chrysippus’s response to the position of dialectician Diodorus Cronos that “everything that is said to be false in the future cannot happen” (*Fat.* 12) while “whatever is going to happen must necessarily happen” (13). Chrysippus is said there to hold the view “that things that will not happen, too, *can* happen, for example that this precious

stone should be broken can happen, even if this is never going to happen, and that it was not necessary for Cypselus to rule in Corinth although this had been declared by the oracle of Apollo a thousand years before" (13). In his comment, Bayle follows Plutarch in taking Chrysippus to be contradicting his own account of fate in order to evade its paradoxical consequences.<sup>46</sup> Leibniz is more circumspect, noting that the views are difficult to decipher since we aren't given much of the underlying argumentation.

Chrysippus's account of necessity actually bears little resemblance to Leibniz's, relying as it does on a conception of physical hindrances to propositions turning out to be true.<sup>47</sup> On Chrysippus's account, all facts about the past are necessary and some (but, crucially, not all) facts about the future are necessary as well. For Leibniz, by contrast, contingency is a feature of the created world quite generally since there would be no logical self-contradiction in things being different than they are. Nevertheless, what Leibniz recognizes and appreciates is that Chrysippus aims to accommodate an indifference of alternative possibilities without compromising the account of the certainty of a future that comes to be through determinate causes. Hence when Leibniz, in the *Theodicy*, identifies figures committed to the offending "absolute necessity" of things, he points not to the Stoics, but to Strato (the Peripatetic) from antiquity and to Abelard, Spinoza, Hobbes, and others among the moderns.<sup>48</sup>

### Spontaneity

For Leibniz, the fact that my future actions are not part of a world that is itself logically necessary ensures that my representations of the good, my motives, "incline without necessitating the will" in such a way that my will "has the power to do otherwise."<sup>49</sup> But since all of creation is equally contingent, human freedom obviously requires something more: "Aristotle has already observed that there are two things in freedom, to wit, spontaneity and choice, and therein lies our mastery over our actions" (*Theodicy* §34). And an agent is spontaneous when the principle of its action lies within itself (*Theodicy* §301).<sup>50</sup>

Whereas the contingency condition for freedom is forward-looking in the sense that it requires that my future actions be non-necessary, the spontaneity condition is backward looking in the sense that it places a restriction on what type of cause could result in a free action: if something *outside* of a person caused her to behave in a certain way, if something thereby *forced* her to act, then we would not be tempted to hold her responsible for what she has done.

For Leibniz, the spontaneity of the will cannot, of course, rest in the uncaused motion of Epicurus or Carneades. Leibniz stresses instead that the thoroughgoing dependence of voluntary actions upon their determinate causes "does not fundamentally preclude the existence within us of a wonderful *spontaneity*, which in a certain sense makes the soul in its resolves independent of the physical influence of all other creatures" (*Theodicy* §59). Although Leibniz identifies Aristotle's conception of the voluntary as his inspiration here, it is the Stoics who articulate a conception of spontaneity in the context of a challenge that might seem to confront Leibniz as well: if all things are fated, or necessary given God's choice to create this world, it might seem as if I am *always* forced when I act. It is in this sense that an unnamed opponent of Chrysippus claimed it would be unjust to punish criminals "if human beings do not do evils voluntarily [*sponte*] but are dragged by fate."<sup>51</sup> Cicero thus reports that Chrysippus, in response, "distinguished types of causes so that he could both escape necessity and retain fate" (*Fat.* 41). The context here is the objection that if everything happens by fate and antecedent causes, then we would have to say that our choice or assent (*assensio*) is caused by something not in our power, namely the impression to which we assent (40). Chrysippus's response, in

brief, is that these external causes form only *part* of the complete causal background to our assent – and not the most important part. In particular, although our assent is “set in motion by an impression,” the impression is a merely “auxiliary and proximate” and not a “perfect and principal” cause. (Chrysippus allows that if the external causes were “perfect and principle” that assent would not be in our power.)

Chrysippus illustrates his opponents’ error with an analogy. If someone sets in motion both a cylinder (or “roller”) and a cone (or “spinning top”), then we commonly say that the person who pushed them caused their movement. But that person hasn’t given the cylinder the capacity to keep rolling straight ahead or given the cone the capacity to spin. The explanation for that difference in movement is obviously the differing natures of each object rather than a cause lying outside of them (*Fat.* 42–3). And assent, likewise, is explained by the disposition of our own mind rather than by external causes. Thus the foolish “go astray through their own impulse [*hormê*] and are harmed by their own purpose and determination [*dianoia kai thesis*].”<sup>52</sup>

This account (if successful) meets Leibniz requirements for a spontaneity compatible with causal determination. But Leibniz’s own mature metaphysics provides a shortcut to this conclusion: each created substance is a “world apart,” there being no metaphysical influx of properties from one substance to another. This is a central feature of his system of pre-established harmony, and Leibniz notes that it ensures that each substance is perfectly spontaneous (*Theodicy* §§59, 65, 296). Despite this, Leibniz’s account of the spontaneity of created substances faces a potential difficulty analogous to the one faced by Chrysippus. For Leibniz, the threat to spontaneity comes not from the causal force of sense impressions or objects of desire, but rather from the omnipotent God who creates these substances (all of whose actions will then play out in accordance with their own natures). The threat is that God seems to be the only real agent and cause, whereas creatures, including intelligent ones, are merely “dragged by fate.” And it is in this connection that Leibniz appeals to Chrysippus’s account of spontaneity, namely as that account appears in the texts and commentary given by Bayle.<sup>53</sup> Regarding the “cylinder of Chrysippus,” Leibniz remarks: “He is right in saying that vice springs from the original constitution of some minds” (*Theodicy* §335).

Bayle objects that the shapes of Chrysippus’s cylinder and cone do have their own more remote external causes, for example in their craftsman: the analogy thus implies that our bad moral disposition likewise has various external causes – all of which could be traced to God as their ultimately cause. This objection to the cylinder analogy is not mentioned in extant ancient sources.<sup>54</sup> But, as Bayle notes, Plutarch levels the related but more general accusation that the Stoics’ all-encompassing fate makes God the cause of all evil.<sup>55</sup> Bayle notes, further, that Lipsius ventures a response due to Seneca: the Stoics located evil not in God, but in the corruption of matter.<sup>56</sup> Since this response denies God’s omnipotence, Leibniz obviously rejects it (*Theodicy* §333). But, significantly, Leibniz thereby rejects what appears to be a Platonizing tendency in Seneca that would concede to Plutarch that fate is not truly all-encompassing after all.

In keeping with his own account of spontaneity, Leibniz thinks of the cylinder and cone as analogous to substances *qua* merely possible essences (rather than to one’s moral character at a particular time) and the push as analogous to God’s action in actuating those essences. On Leibniz’s account, the imperfections of created substances are already included in the essences of the best arrangement of compossible substances and hence are not due to a defect in or hindrance to God’s action in actuating those essences. To illustrate this, Leibniz draws his own analogy. God’s action is like the current of a river, and substances are like boats of varying weights moving at different speeds down the river. The current does not slow down

the heavier boats, but rather moves them forward as much as their own natures allow; and it is likewise not God's action that brings about sin, but rather the imperfection contained in the eternal essences of things (*Theodicy* §30). Leibniz thus remarks that the cylinder of Chrysippus "does not differ greatly" from his boat: "These comparisons tend toward the same end; and that shows that if we were sufficiently informed concerning the opinions of ancient philosophers, we should find in them more reason than is supposed" (§332).<sup>57</sup>

### Intelligence as the "soul of freedom" and the freedom of the sage

In the terminology of the early Stoics, action does not occur without assent (*sunkatathesis*) and a resulting rational impulse (*logikê hormê*).<sup>58</sup> If one values as good (or disvalues as bad) what is by nature merely indifferent, then one will act foolishly. The cylinder analogy serves to remind us that no one is *forced* to respond foolishly to one's impressions: it is only because one continues to assent to false impressions that one continues to be foolish. There would be something paradoxical in complaining that one's own values are forced upon you.

Since both spontaneity and contingency are ubiquitous in Leibniz's system of pre-established harmony, Leibniz shares the Stoic view that it is intelligence that sets human beings apart from the rest of nature as beings who are responsible for what they do: intelligence is the "soul of freedom" (*Theodicy* §288).<sup>59</sup> In a very early attempt at a theodicy, Leibniz appears to hold that such intelligence is even a *sufficient* condition for moral responsibility: only the sophistry of philosophers could lead one to deny that it is sufficient for freedom that the human being "can do what he wills and will what he finds good."<sup>60</sup> This basic approach carries over into Leibniz's mature period, supplemented of course by his accounts of spontaneity and contingency.

Within Leibniz's system of pre-established harmony, the ordinary difference between forced and unforced actions and, more generally, between things we do and things we suffer, is marked by the quality of the relevant perceptions. For example, when we speak of the mind being "affected" by the body or being "swayed by the passions arising out of corporeal representations," what is really going on is that the mind is "imperfect or confused," such that God accommodates the mind to the nature of the body; and when we speak of the body executing the orders of the mind, what is really going on is that the mind "has perfection and distinct thoughts" (*Theodicy* §66).<sup>61</sup> The problem on the horizon here is that if our intelligence or reason is what makes us responsible agents, then it seems that whenever that intelligence is defective we will also be less than fully responsible for what we do. The intelligence that grounds our freedom "involves a distinct knowledge of the object of deliberation," while "we are immune from bondage insofar as we act with distinct knowledge, but we are the slaves of passion insofar as our perceptions are confused" (*Theodicy* §§288–9). In one fragment, Leibniz defines "freedom" as the spontaneity of an intelligent being and then later on concludes:

There is more freedom where more is done from reason, and there is more slavery where more is done from the passions of the soul. For the more we act from reason, the more we follow the perfection of our own nature. And surely the more we act from passions, the more we are enslaved to the power of external things.

(*G VII 108–9*)

Although this manner of dependence on external things obviously could not do damage to the *spontaneity* of a monad or of a simple substance existing as a "world apart," it might seem



to do damage to the *freedom* of such a substance since its intelligence is what allows us to say that it is master and author of its actions (see “On Free Choice,” A VI.iv 1406–8).

The view that the person who acts according to reason instead of passion is *freer* can be traced to the Socratics. The Stoics, in particular, were known for asserting that the sage alone is truly free since he alone lacks the passions that make one dependent on external things. And Leibniz might seem to undermine his own account of moral responsibility by embracing this aspect of Stoicism.<sup>62</sup> But on the Stoic view, the fool is not *forced* to act in the way he does by the external things to which he has made himself dependent. It is the fool’s defective rational assent that engenders his dependence on external things rather than the other way around. Indeed, the early Stoics would have been little tempted to confuse the freedom possessed by the sage with the freedom required for moral responsibility since their word for “freedom,” *eleutheria*, was not used at all in the context of defending their account of fate and moral responsibility.<sup>63</sup>

Although Leibniz does not have the convenience of a such a terminological segregation, he nevertheless recognizes the need to distinguish two very different senses of freedom here: in one meaning of “freedom to will,” freedom contrasts with imperfection and *slavery*, and in another meaning it contrasts with *necessity*. “Employing the former sense, the Stoics said that only the sage is free,” and in this sense it is actually only God who is wholly free. But when we speak of “free will” (*le franc-arbitre*), by contrast, we are not speaking of the degree of perfection of the intellect, but instead referring to the fact that motives of the intellect do not *necessitate* but only *incline* us to action.<sup>64</sup> Leibniz’s account of freedom as intelligent spontaneity supposes, with the Stoics, that we are morally responsible because we organize our practical lives around what we *take* to be best to do or because we act according to the *apparent* good (*Theodicy* §289).<sup>65</sup> By distinguishing the Stoic freedom of the sage from free will, Leibniz is able to assert without contradiction that “a free will and an enslaved will are one and the same thing” (§277).<sup>66</sup>

### Providence and evil

We have seen that Leibniz objects that the “new Stoics” imagine God’s creation to be an act of necessity that precludes any wisdom or providential care. But the ancient Stoics intended fate to embody providence (*pronoia*).<sup>67</sup> It is a Stoic view that the manifest goodness of creation – in terms of both the hospitality of the Earth and the “ordered beauty” of the heavens – leads all peoples to agree on the existence of the gods (Cicero, *Nat. D.* 2.13–15). Indeed, the world could not be any better: anyone who tries “to improve some detail will either make it worse or will be demanding an improvement impossible in the nature of things” (2.86).

It is of course far from obvious that the universe we live in actually is the best: even if the heavens move in an orderly fashion, there is plenty of suffering here on Earth. Stoic axiology seems to provide a ready response: virtue is both necessary and sufficient for happiness since only the health of the soul is a true benefit to its possessor. Epictetus thus stresses repeatedly that nothing can truly harm us except for our own opinion that something other than virtue is valuable. Thus one should consider one’s children and one’s own well-being to be dispensable (*Ench.* 14 and 16). Otherwise, one will hate the gods when one’s children are taken away or one experiences pain: the gods “govern the universe well and justly,” but you will hate them unless you place your conception of good and bad “in those things alone that are within our power,” namely our own good and bad dispositions (*Ench.* 31.1–2; see *Diss.* 1.22). In short: “If anyone suffers misfortune, remember that he suffers it through his own fault, since God created all human beings to enjoy happiness, to enjoy peace of mind” (*Diss.*

3.24.2). On this theodicy, God can be considered provident because the sufferings we experience and the injustices we perceive are actually not evils at all. God has given us everything we need to be happy (*Diss.* 1.6).<sup>68</sup>

Leibniz is unwilling to following the Stoic “cloud dwellers” in supposing that we could dispense with pleasure (A VI.i 464; L 136). Hence he needs a different strategy for explaining how physical evil is part of the world produced by an omnipotent, provident God. Leibniz occasionally takes advantage of the privation theory of evil associated with Augustine, especially in the context of his own response to the Manichaeism that occupied Bayle (e.g. *Theodicy* §153). Leibniz links the privation theory to Stoicism insofar as he finds it expressed in Epictetus’ claim that “just as a target isn’t set up to be missed, so nothing that is bad by nature comes into being in the universe” (*Theodicy* §378).<sup>69</sup> But Leibniz rejects the privation theory outright in earlier texts, relying instead on the strategy of contrasting our local and finite understanding of what is good and evil with an understanding that encompasses the whole universe. The beauty of things might not be apparent when things are “detached from their wholes,” but we nevertheless can see by means of reflection on God that these detached things “must have not less of justice and beauty.”<sup>70</sup> In this vein, Leibniz derides

those foolish critics of providence who, having heard a few beats of a song, rush headlong to an unreasonable judgment of the whole melody ... For they are not aware that in this near infinity of things ... it is impossible for a mortal, who is not yet purified, to grasp the whole melody. They do not recognize that these dissonances interspersed in the parts make the consonance of the universe more exquisite.

(“*Confessio philosophi*,” A VI.iii 146; CP 103; see A VI.iii 126; CP 53)

The same accounting for evil appears in Leibniz’s mature thought: “the most distinguished masters of composition quite often mix dissonances with consonances.”<sup>71</sup> Leibniz acknowledges Stoic antecedents to this view. He cites Chrysippus’s view in this connection that “there are sometimes portions in a comedy which are of no worth in themselves and which nevertheless lend grace to the whole poem” and defends this view from the objections of Plutarch (*Theodicy* §334).<sup>72</sup>

Bayle objects that God should be able to achieve what he wants without recourse to evil and connects the view that “the evil of the parts is often the good of the whole” (*Theodicy* §214) with the “blasphemous” Stoic view of Marcus Aurelius that God is narcissistically concerned to create a harmony pleasing to Himself (§217). Despite reaffirming here his own view that “evil serves to augment the good” (§216), Leibniz actually agrees with Bayle’s negative assessment of Marcus. For Leibniz, Marcus’s view amounts to the claim that we should be content with what happens to us “just because it is necessary” and can’t be avoided.<sup>73</sup> Leibniz allows that this view could engender a tranquility of *patience*, but asserts that *contentment* could arise only if “the general good becomes in reality the good of those who love the author of all good” since “what for me would be an evil would not cease to be such because it would be my master’s good, unless this good reflected back on me” (§217). To this end, Leibniz claims that when evils contribute to the good of the whole, it is at least in part because it contributes to the welfare of *human beings*. God wills physical evil “to prevent greater evils or to obtain greater good,” for “[e]vil often serves to make us savour good the more; sometimes too it contributes to a greater perfection in him who suffers it” (*Theodicy* §23). Thus “afflictions, especially those the good have, only lead to their greater good.”<sup>74</sup> God does not, by contrast, will moral evil (*Theodicy* §23), but he can nevertheless permit it

since “it happens very often that it may serve as a means of obtaining good or of preventing another evil” (§24).<sup>75</sup>

Despite his criticism of Marcus, Leibniz’s own more anthropocentric conception of the goodness of the world has its antecedents in early Stoic thought. Chrysippus and the Stoics claim against Epicurus and others who would deny providence that the gods are lovers of humankind (*philanthrôpoi*)<sup>76</sup> and that the gods made us “for our own and each other’s sake,” whereas animals are made for us: “horses to help us in war, dogs in hunting, and leopards, bears and lions to give us practice in courage.”<sup>77</sup> Chrysippus is reported by Plutarch to have claimed that bedbugs, too, serve human welfare since they prevent people from sleeping too long (*Stoic. rep.* 1044d). And even Epictetus asserts that there is a reason for his physical suffering: God is “training me and making use of me as a witness in front of everyone else” (*Diss.* 3.24.113). In this way, the Stoics do not simply deny that physical evils are evils, but instead says that they serve a human good or to else to punish the wicked. Plutarch complains that on this view punishment would be unjust since the origin of vice is itself “in accord with the reason of Zeus” (*Stoic. rep.* 1050e). But Leibniz seems to positively embrace such a view – at least in an early letter: “Taken together with punishment or atonement, sins are good, i.e. harmonious. For there is no harmony except as a result of contraries.”<sup>78</sup> Commenting later on Bayle’s claim that the rationalism of the Stoics leads them to the absurd view that vice is *useful*, Leibniz notes that “they were right, it’s the truth”: without vice, there would be less virtue and it would be less great. And rejecting the ridicule heaped upon the Stoics by Plutarch, Leibniz affirms that even gout can be useful.<sup>79</sup> Leibniz’s principal complaint against the Stoics’ account of the usefulness of the evil is merely that “they fail by wanting to explain exactly how it is useful.”<sup>80</sup>

For the mature Leibniz it is essential not just that God chooses the best world, but also that He wills the good and even the salvation of *each* rational being. To account for evil in this picture, he claims that insofar as God considers us as detached from the whole, He aims at only our well-being through an “antecedent will,” but that on account of the logical limitations of what is compossible, God also wills a world in which we suffer evils through a “consequent will” (*Theodicy* §§22, 222).<sup>81</sup> In this scheme, physical evil often serves for “amendment and example” (§23). Leibniz remarks that “the ancient Stoics were not far removed from this system,” referring in particular to the claim attributed to Chrysippus that the original intention (*consilium principale*) of providence or nature was to bring about only what is good for human beings whereas evils are merely the inevitable consequences of the good things, arising not by nature (*kata phusin*), but rather by way of “concomitance” (*kata parakolouthêsin*). Leibniz notes, in particular, Chrysippus’s claims about the fragility of the human skull and our susceptibility to disease and to vice (*Theodicy* §209; see §336).<sup>82</sup> Although the early Stoics do not claim that *matter* resists God’s forming power, it is far from obvious (from our limited sources) how these attempts to deny a divine source for physical evil could be consistent with their account of an all-encompassing fate.<sup>83</sup> In that respect, Leibniz’s view that these concomitances are due to wholly *logical* restrictions on what is compossible could be seen as an advance.

Leibniz complains that the “new Stoics” are able to admit providence in name only. For them,

there is no happiness other than the tranquility of a life here below content with its own lot, since it is madness to oppose the torrent of things and to be discontented with what is immutable. If they knew that all things are ordered for the general good and for the particular welfare of those who know how to make use of them, they would not identify happiness with simple patience.<sup>84</sup>

Leibniz repeats this critique in the *Theodicy*, noting that although the *fatum Stoicum* did not divert men from their affairs (i.e. is not vulnerable to the idle argument), it gave men mere tranquility “through the consideration of necessity, which renders our anxieties and our vexations needless” and thus imparted a merely “forced patience” (Preface, G VI 30; H 54). This matches Leibniz’s account of the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, which instructs us how to achieve tranquil *patience*, but which cannot offer true *contentment*. For Leibniz, we can be content only if we consider God as taking providential care of his creatures, particularly the rational ones. However, as we have seen, Leibniz’s principal attempts in the area have Stoic antecedents that Leibniz acknowledges in the body of the *Theodicy*. In that regard, we can see that views of the early Stoics provide important materials for an account of fate that approaches what Leibniz calls the *fatum Christianum*, which says: “Do your duty and be content with that which shall come of it, not only because you cannot resist divine providence or the nature of things (which may suffice for tranquility, but not for contentment), but also because you have to do with a wise master” (G VI 31; H 55).<sup>85</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Abbreviations: A, Akademie (ed.), *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* (Leibniz 1923–); AG, Ariew and Garber (eds), *Philosophical Essays* (Leibniz 1989); CP, *Confessio philosophi: Papers concerning the Problem of Evil, 1671–1678* (Leibniz 2005); G, Gerhardt (ed.), *Die philosophische Schriften* (Leibniz 1978); H, Huggard (trans.), *Theodicy* (Leibniz 1951); L, Loemker (ed.), *Philosophical Papers and Letters* (Leibniz 1969).
- 2 On Boethius, see Colish 1990: II 275. On Bramhall, see Brooke 2012: 648. For another example, see Sellars 2012 on Cudworth. Cf. Plutarch, *De fac.* 927a–d.
- 3 According to Thomasius (1676), “Plato said that God was the voluntary cause of the world, Aristotle and the Stoics that he was the necessary cause” (*Exercitatio de Stoica mundi exustione*, diss. 2.38; trans. Santinello 1993: 426).
- 4 Stob. 1.5.15 (SVF 2.913; LS 55M3); Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1056c (SVF 2.997).
- 5 Cicero, *Div.* 2.61; Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato* 574e (SVF 2.912); Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1045c (SVF 2.973); cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato* 191,30–192,28 (SVF 2.945; LS 55N). Leibniz also uses the slogan (G VII 300), but typically speaks of the principle that nothing happens without a reason (*ratio, raison, Grund*). Compare this with Calcidius’s report of Plato’s view: “some things result from providence alone, some from destiny, some from our free will, some also from the vicissitudes of fortune, while a great many things happen by chance” (in *Timaeum* 144b–145; as quoted in den Boeft 1970). For his part, Leibniz claims: “nothing happens without it being possible for someone who knows enough things to give a reason sufficient to determine why it is so and not otherwise” (*Principles of Nature and Grace*, G VI 602; AG 210).
- 6 “Primary Truths,” Leibniz 1903: 519; AG 32. See *Discourse on Metaphysics* §9, AG 41–2.
- 7 E.g. Letter to Casati of 1689, A II.ii 288; see Rodriguez-Pereyra 2014: 91–2. Also see Rutherford 1995: 141–4.
- 8 Cicero, *Acad.* 2.77–8. See Lewis 1995 and Sellars 2006: 73.
- 9 *Acad.* 2.85 (SVF 2.113; LS 40J); cf. 50. Also see Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1077c–e (LS 28O).
- 10 Philosophical disputes among sects arise largely because they suppose “a greater reality in things outside of us than that of well-regulated phenomena” (G IV 523; L 496). Although there is a reason why any fact is true “most of the time these reasons cannot be known to us” (*Monadology* §32, AG 217).
- 11 “Primary Truths,” AG 32; Leibniz 1903: 519–20. Also see Leibniz’s Fourth Paper against Clarke §4 (G VII 372) and his Fifth Paper §23 (G VII 394). Cicero mentions eggs at *Acad.* 2.58.
- 12 See Hankinson 2001: 14–15.
- 13 According to Chrysippus, “it is impossible for any of the parts, even the smallest one, to turn out differently than according to its common nature and reason” (Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1050a; SVF 2.936; IG 180; also 1056c). According to the Stoics even “a chance turning of the neck or extension of a finger or raising of the eyebrows” are governed by fate such that the contrary movement is impossible (Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato* 175,9–10).

- 14 See e.g. Cicero, *Div.* 1.55, 1.122.
- 15 Chrysippus argues that “the prophecies of diviners would not be true unless all things were governed by fate” (Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 4.3.1; *SVF* 2.939; LS 55P). Cf. Cicero, *Fat.* 33 and Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato* 574e.
- 16 Letter to Coste on Human Freedom of 1707, G III 403; AG 195–6. Also see *Theodicy* §360 and *Monadology* §22.
- 17 “Von dem Verhängnisse,” G VII 117–18. This unpublished essay is commonly dated to 1695. Kuhn (1913: 72–3) and Rutherford (2003: 66) note the Stoic character of this text. Bobzien claims that Stoic determinism differs from modern counterparts insofar as it is not only (1) expressly teleological but also (2) not realized by universal causal laws (Bobzien 1998: 32–3). Bobzien has been challenged on the second point by Salles (2005), but Leibniz’s determinism is in any case not “modern” in Bobzien’s sense: the *existence* as well as any miraculous *exceptions* to general laws of nature would both be rooted in the more fundamental reason for things, namely the goodness of a world so constituted (see *Theodicy* §54).
- 18 Leibniz attributes the definition to Gellius by way of Justus Lipsius. But this is not evidence for Leibniz’s independent knowledge of Lipsius’s Stoicism (*pace* Rutherford 2001: 157 n. 5 and 2003: 66), let alone of Gellius, since Leibniz is simply paraphrasing Bayle’s discussion in Note H of his *Dictionary* article on Chrysippus. Leibniz follows Bayle, and in turn Lipsius, in referring to Gellius, *N4* 6.2, but the passage appears at 7.2.3 (LS 55K) in more recent editions.
- 19 Crusius 1743: §7, referring to the same Gellius passage.
- 20 E.g. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato* 192,8–13 (*SVF* 2.945; LS 55N) and Marcus Aurelius 4.40.
- 21 See Hahn 1977: 137 and Wright 1995: 118.
- 22 The Stoic character of this passage is noted by Platz (1973: 101) and Rutherford (2003: 66).
- 23 G IV 523; L 496. This passage is noted by Platz (1973: 205) and Rutherford (2003: 66).
- 24 Letter to Masson of 1716, G IV 627; AG 228. See *Monadology* §61 and “Sur le principe de raison,” §10, Leibniz 1903: 14–15. Also see Rutherford 1995: 166 n. 11.
- 25 Indeed, each substance “expresses, however confusedly, everything that happens in the universe, whether past, present, or future” (*Discourse on Method* §9, AG 42).
- 26 “On Transubstantiation” (of 1688 or 1669) A VI.i 510. In keeping with his “eclecticism,” he compares his view with Plato and others as well. See Mercer 2001: 211.
- 27 *Discourse on Method* §14, AG 46.
- 28 See Mercer 2001: 192, 273–6. Mercer notes that the Platonist conception of interrelation is itself influenced by earlier Stoic ideas. She notes further that as early as the *New Physical Hypothesis* (of 1671) Leibniz utilizes the world soul of “Plato and the Stoics” to explain creaturely activity (273–6), likening it to “an invisible fire that permeates all the things in our world” (Letter of June 1671 to de Carcavy, A II.i 128, as quoted in Mercer 2001: 278; but also see Garber 2009: 39). For further thoughts on possible inspirations for Leibniz’s account of universal harmony, see Antognazza 1999.
- 29 Letter to Coste on human freedom of 1707, G III 404; AG 195; see G IV 626; AG 228.
- 30 G IV 523; L 496.
- 31 See Aristotle, *Metaph.* 5.30, 1025a25, and the Platonist view noted above.
- 32 *Aëtius* 1.29.7; *SVF* 2.966; IG 183. Cf. Aristotle, *Ph.* 2.4, 196b5–6.
- 33 “Von dem Verhängnisse,” G VII 118–19.
- 34 Clarke articulates a version of this view in his exchange with Leibniz (G VII 381).
- 35 See Letter to Coste of 1707, AG 196; G III 402; and “Von dem Verhängnisse,” G VII 118.
- 36 Leibniz’s Fourth Paper against Clarke §2, G VII 371–2.
- 37 Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1045b–c; IG 183–4. Bobzien analyzes the passage in great detail (Bobzien 1998: 34–44 and 274–6).
- 38 Also see *New Essays* II.xxi.13; A VI.vi 179, Leibniz 1981.
- 39 Thus there is no question of Bayle’s influence. See “Von der Allmacht und Allwissenheit Gottes,” §13 (from 1671), the “Confessio philosophi” (from 1672 or 1673), A VI.iii 129; CP 59, the *Discourse on Metaphysics* §4 (from 1686), the “Dialogue on Human Freedom” (from 1695), Leibniz 1948: 363, and the “Theodicaea” (from 1695 or 1696), Leibniz 1948: 370.
- 40 Bobzien 1998: 181–2. Bobzien also discusses and compares the similar presentations in Origen and Eusebius.
- 41 Whether that is sufficient to counter the basic thrust of the argument is a separate question. See Brennan 2005: 270–87.
- 42 “Dialogue on Human Freedom,” Leibniz 1948: 363; AG 113.

- 43 Leibniz distinguishes hypothetical from absolute or metaphysical necessity in *Discourse on Metaphysics* §13 (G IV 436–9; AG 44–6) in letters to Arnauld (G II 37–8; AG 69–70), and the *Theodicy* (§§37, 52–3), among other places.
- 44 See Leibniz’s Fifth Paper against Clarke §77 (G VII 409; L 710), but also “Causa Dei,” §20, G VI 441.
- 45 Moreover, as noted above, the kind of human freedom that this metaphysics is meant to underwrite is one that the Stoics don’t seem to require since they are not interested in defending the Christian doctrine of God’s punitive justice, namely that the wicked will be punished (and the blessed be rewarded) for “eons of eons” in the life to come.
- 46 Bayle refers to *Stoic. rep.*, presumably 1055d–f. See Bobzien 1998: 123–4.
- 47 See Bobzien 1998: 101–12, esp. 112–16. Platz erroneously claims that Chrysippus identifies the possible with the thinkable (Platz 1973: 26–9) and thus that Leibniz employs the same concept of possibility that appears in the Cicero passage (Platz 1973: 103). For Leibniz, “when one speaks of the *possibility* of a thing it is not a question of the causes that can bring about or prevent its actual existence” (*Theodicy* §235; cf. *New Essays* II.xxi.11; A VI.vi 176, Leibniz 1981). Also see Rutherford (2001: 140).
- 48 In the “Causa Dei” appended to the *Theodicy* Leibniz does accuse “the Stoic Diodorus” of falling into that error (§22, G VI 442), but he presumably means the dialectician Diodorus Cronos with whom Chrysippus is engaged in a “great struggle” over future contingents (according to the Cicero passage extracted in §170).
- 49 *Discourse on Metaphysics* §30.
- 50 Cf. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1, 1111a22–4. (*Spontaneum* translates *kekousion*, which is usually rendered as “voluntary” in English.) Also see Leibniz 1903: 474.
- 51 Gellius, *NA* 7.2.5 (trans. Bobzien 1998: 243). Leibniz summarizes the passage at *Theodicy* §332.
- 52 Chrysippus *apud* Gellius, *NA* 7.2.12; LS 62D. See Bobzien 1998: 255–71 for an analysis of these portions of Cicero’s *De fato* and Gellius. The Gellius passage makes clear that the cylinder and cone represent good and bad moral characters.
- 53 In his *Dictionary* article “Chrysippus,” Note H.
- 54 Bobzien nevertheless considers the prospects for a Stoic rejoinder to such an objection (Bobzien 1998: 290–301).
- 55 *Dictionary* article “Paulicians,” Note G, referring to Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1076c–1077a.
- 56 *Dictionary* article “Chrysippus,” Note H, quoting Lipsius (*Physiologia Stoicorum* 1.14), who quotes Seneca (*QNat.* 1 *praef.* 16). Cf. Seneca, *Prov.* 5.9.
- 57 Leibniz’s treatment of Chrysippus’s cylinder is discussed in Kuhn 1913: 65–6, Platz 1973: 189, and Rutherford 2001: 141.
- 58 In a (possibly later) Stoic view reported by Nemesius (*De natura hominis* 105–6), the distinguishing feature of free actions is that the impulse is based on judgment (*krisis*). See Salles 2005.
- 59 “[S]pontaneity and intelligence ... are found united in us in deliberation, whereas the beasts lack the second condition” (*Theodicy* §302). Cf. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.2, 1111b5–10, 1112a14–19. Thus: “true spontaneity is common to us and all simple substances, [but] in the intelligent or free substance this becomes mastery over its actions” (*Theodicy* §291).
- 60 “Von der Allmacht und Allwissenheit Gottes,” §19, CP 23; A VI.i 545. In this text, Leibniz appears to deny that spontaneity with respect to God is a condition on freedom: “it is enough that you did not want to give up your sinning and take responsibility for your salvation” (§13, CP 17; A VI.i 542). And in his famous letter to Wedderkopf from the same year, Leibniz notes that necessity “takes nothing away from freedom because it takes nothing away from the will and the use of reason [... i.e.] the freedom of willing the best” (A II.i 117–18; CP 4–5).
- 61 See *New Essays* II.xxi.12, 19–21, 72; A VI.vi 177, 180–1, 210, Leibniz 1981.
- 62 Seidler 1985 notes the Stoic character of Leibniz’s account of psychic slavery and claims that Leibniz’s method for attaining a contrasting freedom reflects the influence of the Roman Stoics and as well as modern Neostoics such as Lipsius, Du Vair, Grotius, and Scioppius. Seidler claims further, following Platz 1973: 177–8, that Leibniz’s reliance on these Stoic antecedents leaves him without a coherent conception of freedom (34–5).
- 63 See Stough 1978: 224 and Bobzien 1998.
- 64 *New Essays* II.xxi.8; A VI.vi 175–6, Leibniz 1981.
- 65 Leibniz criticizes Descartes for his “physiological” conception of the passions, stating that it is perhaps “useful for medicine” but “inadequate for morals.” “The Stoics were wrong, perhaps, in defining the passions by general opinion as by their popular classification, but they were right in examining the opinions which contributed toward forming and maintaining these” (G III 427; L 632; cf. *New Essays* II.xx.9; A VI.vi 167, Leibniz 1981).

- 66 Also see Forman 2008.
- 67 See Frede 2002.
- 68 This strand of Stoic thought is noted by Kuhn 1913: 61–2 and Rutherford 2001: 146–7.
- 69 Leibniz quotes a Latin version of *Ench.* 27 that appears (along with a discussion of Simplicius’s commentary) in Bayle’s *Dictionary* article “Paulicians,” Note N.
- 70 “Meditation on the Common Concept of Justice,” §1, Leibniz 1988: 52–3.
- 71 *The Ultimate Origination of Things*, G VI 116; AG 153.
- 72 See Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1065d (which is extracted in Bayle’s *Dictionary* article “Paulicians,” note G).
- 73 See Marcus Aurelius 5.8.
- 74 *The Ultimate Origination of Things*, G VI 116; AG 153.
- 75 Thus the crime of Sextus Tarquinius “serves for great things” (§416; also see Cameron 2007). Leibniz also invokes the *felix culpa* in this connection (§10 and Appendix, G VI 377; H 378; cf. “Examen religionis Christianae,” A VI.iv 2359). See Kuhn 1913: 47.
- 76 Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1051d–e.
- 77 Porphyry, *Abst.* 3.20.1 (*SVF* 2.1152; LS 54P). The Stoic account in Cicero’s *Nat. D.* goes even further. God cares for human beings not merely in the sense that happiness is in our power because virtue is (see 2.167), but also such that providence even appears to be a “disciple of Epicurus” by providing swarms of delicious fish and other such gifts (2.160). Indeed, this bounty is intended *for man alone* even if animals sometime plunder it (2.157–8). Cicero links this account to Chrysippus by attributing to him the view (also noted in the Porphyry passage) that the soul of the pig serves the (anthropocentric) purpose of keeping its flesh from rotting (2.160).
- 78 Letter to Wedderkopf (from 1671), A II.i 118; CP 5.
- 79 “Notes on Bayle’s *Dictionary* Article ‘Paulicians,’” Leibniz 1854: 185–6. (See Note G of Bayle’s article, referring to Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1065d.)
- 80 Leibniz 1854: 185. Leibniz repeats the claim at G IV 554; L 567.
- 81 Cf. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 19 art. 6 *ad* 1.
- 82 Leibniz does not present any of this material in his own words, but rather quotes a lengthy passage from Note T of Bayle’s article on Chrysippus, which includes Gellius, *NA* 7.1.7–13 (also in LS 54Q) together with Bayle’s paraphrase and commentary. The skull example is due to Plato (*Ti.* 75b–c); see Bryan 2013.
- 83 See Algra 2003: 170–3. Cicero relates a different Stoic argument for the view that providence pertains not just to the whole but to each individual (*Nat. D.* 2.164–7).
- 84 G VII 334; AG 282. See *Codex juris gentium*, Preface §13 (A IV.v 63; Leibniz 1988: 173–4); and *New Essays* IV.viii.9; A VI.vi 432, Leibniz 1981 (where he claims that without the expectation of afterlife, the sage attains mere tranquil patience). Rutherford 2003 provides an analysis of the role of hope in Leibniz’s theodicy and theories of virtue and happiness in a way that shows both important affinities and differences between Leibniz and Stoics.
- 85 Also see Leibniz’s Fifth Paper against Clarke §13 (G VII 391; L 697–8). In the essay on fate discussed above, Leibniz implies that cosmological considerations alone are sufficient for such contentment (G VII 119–20) and hence form “the proper basis of the true religion” (121). In this text at least, there is no mention of the hope for justice apportioned in the next life, nor indeed of any anthropocentric considerations whatsoever. In short, Leibniz sounds like Marcus. But the *Theodicy* and other texts show that Leibniz is not satisfied with such a view.

## Further reading

Kuhn’s 1913 dissertation – which builds on a suggestion of his adviser Paul Barth (1908: 293–5) – remains the most complete treatment of the relation between the Leibnizian and Stoic theodicies. Rutherford’s essays on the same general topic (Rutherford 2001, 2003) have a narrower but philosophically richer focus. Platz (1973) argues that Leibniz’s compatibilist conception of freedom is in substantial agreement with Stoic views, particularly as the latter appear in Cicero’s *De fato*. Spanneut (1973: 295–9) usefully collects some Stoic-sounding passages from Leibniz, but does not offer much by way of analysis and appears to follow Erdmann’s questionable assumption that Leibniz’s notes on Descartes’s *On the Passions* (appearing under the name *De vita beata* at A VI.iii 636–44) represent his own views. In the essay “*Apokatastasis*” and related texts in the volume *De l’Horizon de la doctrine humaine*, edited by Fichant (Leibniz 1991), Leibniz entertains and partly defends the ancient doctrine of the eternal return of the same; these texts are discussed by Fichant (1991a, 1991b) and Rescher (2013: ch. 6).

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# THE EPICUREAN STOICISM OF THE FRENCH ENLIGHTENMENT

*Edward Andrew*

Roman Stoic texts, and especially the works of Seneca, were a central influence on French Enlightenment thought. Parallels between the social and political conditions in the first and eighteenth centuries gave his works a renewed relevance. For example in his *De beneficiis* Seneca set forth the three graces that bind a hierarchical world; gracious giving, grateful receiving, and graceful requiting make the world go round – a traditional gift economy anticipating a market exchange of goods and services. The poor or powerless can requite their debt to the rich and powerful with praise or services instead of money. Patronage in the eighteenth century took the form of economic support – the tribute or obligation that opulence owes to genius or talent as Rousseau and Burke had it – or political protection.

Frederick the Great and Catherine the Great were the foremost patrons of the French Enlightenment, but Catherine would not permit Voltaire's and Diderot's writings to be published in Russia; and Frederick would not allow Rousseau to write on politics or religion while in Prussian territory, although Frederick, and his Field Marshall, James Keith, were Rousseau's most reliable patrons. Keith's friend, David Hume, another recipient of aristocratic patronage, persuaded Rousseau to come to England, telling him that the better price authors received from booksellers would facilitate economic independence. Hume, and other Britons, held the enlightened illusion that booksellers were the modern patrons of literature. All major writers of the eighteenth century were recipients of aristocratic or royal patronage and most prided themselves on their independence of mind. The republic of letters was not a self-sustaining marketplace of ideas. Jean d'Alembert decried patronage in *Essai sur la société des gens de lettres et des grands* although he was in receipt of five pensions. Seneca's views on patronage and Stoic virtue helped eighteenth-century thinkers negotiate the challenge of combining political servility with intellectual autonomy, the real servility of Epictetus with the imagined sovereignty of Marcus Aurelius. The age of Enlightenment was the age of Frederick, as Kant firmly declared in response to his question "What is Enlightenment?"

Besides the monarchical Stoicism of Seneca, the republican figures of Cato and Brutus were widely deployed in eighteenth-century literature on both sides of the English Channel. The two Catos (Marcus Portius and Marcus Portius Utencensis) and two Brutuses (Lucius Junius and Marcus Junius) were often merged in eighteenth-century literature as exemplars of republican virtue. In this age of imperial rivalries, French thinkers invariably presented England as Carthage, which, as Cato the Elder indicated, should be destroyed (Andrew 2011). The

severity of republican Stoicism was embodied in the French Revolution by Maximilien Robespierre who tarnished for subsequent generations the Stoic ideals of virtue and duty. However, before the Revolution, the Senecan ideals of generosity, clemency and tranquil happiness corresponded to the ideals of the Roman Empire more than the Roman Republic; as Miriam Griffin (1984: 95) pointed out, the Senecan virtues of generosity and clemency “presuppose the inferior position of those they benefit.” Senecan virtues were not those of the austerity and severity associated with the names of Cato and Brutus; they were also quite distant from the Machiavellian republicanism of miserly economy, cruel justice, and restless acquisitiveness (Brooke 2012: 22–5). In this chapter, I wish to present other reasons why *les lumières* found Stoicism attractive besides its role in justifying patron-client relationships and the imperialist republicanism of the English Civil War and the American and French revolutions.

### Montesquieu

Montesquieu’s *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* (1734) indicated that Stoic doctrine supported republican heroism whereby self-preservation is superseded by the pursuit of triumphal glory, and suicide is an alternative to servility and humiliation (Montesquieu 1999: 116–18) and also formed the character of the greatest emperors (the Antonines) whose rule made the subjects of the Roman Empire happier than any time before or since (Montesquieu 1999: 141–6). In Book 24 of *De l’esprit des lois* (1748), analyzing the relationship of religion and law, Montesquieu wrote a panegyric to Stoicism, which he held to be a form of religion, “one whose principles were more worthy of men and more appropriate for forming good men” than any other. Were it not for his Christian profession, “I would not be able to keep myself from numbering the destruction of Zeno’s sect among the misfortunes of human kind.” Despite Julian’s apostasy, “there has been no prince more worthy of governing men.” Stoicism “alone knew how to make citizens; it alone made great men; it alone made great emperors.” Stoicism was a social ethic; one’s duty was to procure the happiness of one’s fellow citizens and the human species. Montesquieu declared that Stoicism “exaggerated only those things in which there is greatness: scorn for pleasures and pains.” Montesquieu suggests here that a more Epicurean form of Stoicism would suit the age of “doux commerce” better than the allegedly pre-commercial or martial Romans. Diogenes Laertius’s *Life of Zeno*, a basic source of eighteenth-century opinions about Stoicism, indicated that Zeno “was very economical, and descended even to the meanness of the barbarians, under the pretence of economy.” The civilized *lumière* would never descend to barbarism. In the entry “Philosophe,” in Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*, we read that the *philosophe* rejects “Stoic insensibility” and needs, beyond strict necessity, “a respectable (*honnête*) superfluity necessary to an honorable (*honnête*) man.” A modified form of Stoicism, which we shall call “epicurean,”<sup>1</sup> was the only form of Stoicism suitable to the age.

Another theme that I shall be following up in this chapter is suggested in the first sentence of chapter 11, immediately after chapter 10 of Book 24 on the Stoics. Montesquieu (1989: 466) wrote: “Men, being made to preserve, feed and clothe themselves, and do all the things done in society, religion should not give them an overly contemplative life.” While he footnoted the Chinese religions as overly contemplative, he strongly suggested that the monkish practices of meditation and prayer placed the Christian *vita contemplativa* lower than a Stoic *vita activa*. Stoicism as a way of life, rather than Stoic contributions to ontology or epistemology, attracted the attention of anti-metaphysical *philosophes*. Despite being opposed to “Stoic insensibility,” the *philosophe* follows in the footsteps of Cato of

Utica whose nature directed him to virtuous activity (Diderot and D'Alembert 1751–65: XII 510–11).

Seneca was widely esteemed as the philosophic equal of Plato and Aristotle in the eighteenth century, a reputation he did not enjoy in any century before or since (Ross 1974: 116–65). Indeed, from Bernard Fontenelle's *Une digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes* (1688) to Anne-Louise-Germaine de Staël's *De la littérature* (1799) Roman philosophy was judged superior to Greek philosophy. The French *philosophes* preferred the experimental philosophy of Bacon, Locke and Newton to the seventeenth-century rationalist systems of Hobbes, Spinoza, Descartes and Leibniz. Experimental philosophy was seen as open and developmental, while systematic thought was judged to be speculative, closed and dogmatic. Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* replaced comprehensive philosophic systems; *philosophes* are not attached to systems (Diderot and D'Alembert 1751–65: XII 510).

Diderot devoted two of his longest works, *Essai sur la vie de Sénèque le philosophe, sur ses écrits, et sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron* (1778; henceforth *EVSP*) and *Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron, et sur les moeurs et les écrits de Sénèque, pour servir d'introduction à la lecture de ce philosophe* (1780 henceforth *ERCN*), to a defense of Seneca's moral philosophy, and an analysis of its social context. Diderot wrote these works, at the request of Jacques-André Naigeon, as an introduction to a translation of Seneca's works by Abbé La Grange, first published in 1777. Baron d'Holbach commissioned La Grange's translation of Seneca's works into French – two previous translations of Seneca's works were published in 1776 – as well as Diderot's works on the life and times of Seneca. Diderot amended his work in response to criticisms both of Seneca's life and morals, and that of *les philosophes*. Diderot used these works to attack the life and work of his former friend, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and also Julian Offray de La Mettrie, author of *Anti-Sénèque ou le souverain bien*. D'Holbach's *Système de la nature* (1770) was an extensive elaboration of Stoic moral philosophy, and the patron of the *coterie holbachique*, as Rousseau called the materialist *philosophes* who gathered in D'Holbach's salon. Diderot's *EVSP* and *ERCN* were intended, as Elena Russo (Russo 2009: 1–10) has argued, as a counter to Rousseau's *Confessions*, an *apologia pro vita sua* presented as a defense of the life and work of Seneca. Diderot's *Note sur la désunion de Diderot et J.-J. Rousseau* is an appendix to *ERCN* (Diderot 1969–73: XIII 627–30).

### Diderot and La Mettrie

If philosophy is held to be more a way of life than a set of interrelated ideas, then it is perhaps understandable that Diderot should criticize not only the erroneous ideas but also the character of the *philosophe*. With respect to La Mettrie, Diderot certainly played the man not the ball. Diderot called the author of *Anti-Sénèque* “dissolute, shameless, buffoon, flatterer,” someone who “was made for the life of courts and the favor of the great. He died, as he had to die, a victim of his own intemperance and madness” (Diderot 1969–73: XII [*EVSP*] 641; XIII [*ERCN*] 463). La Mettrie did in fact die after eating a large helping of *pâte de façon aux truffes*, which may have been tainted, but which to Diderot was a just dessert for anti-Stoical intemperance. Diderot followed Diogenes Laertius's *Life of Zeno* in which Zeno is strongly opposed to Epicurean gluttony. Diderot got the story of La Mettrie's end from Voltaire, a rival with La Mettrie for the favors of Émilie du Châtelet and Frederick the Great. La Mettrie dedicated *La Volupté* to Madame la Marquise de \*\*\* with whom he had enjoyed life's greatest delights (Vartarian 1960: 5). Voltaire was an epicure with a small appetite; when he discovered the divine Émilie in flagrante with another lover (Saint-Lambert), she explained to Voltaire that she took lovers partly to satisfy her needs but mainly from a regard for his

fragile health – and reason prevailed over conventional outrage. La Mettrie celebrated his healthy voluptuous experimentation with the marquise, a translator of Newton and Mandeville, and the author of works on physics, education and morals. But the real rivalry was over the favor of Frederick. La Mettrie had upset Voltaire by telling him that Frederick had told him that he used Voltaire to polish his French prose but when he had squeezed out the juice from the orange he would throw away the rind. As Voltaire wrote to Frederick, individuals will compete for “fame, position, women, and above all the favors of you masters of the earth” (Aldrington 1927: 72). Thus, Voltaire cannot be considered an unbiased reporter of the materialist philosopher’s practice of dying.

Diderot charged La Mettrie with being a court flatterer. Indeed La Mettrie (1996: 135; cf. 2004) wrote in *Anti-Sénèque*: “To appreciate worth is worthy, and to reward it is divine. Kings; imitate the hero of the North and be the heroes of humanity, as you are its leaders. When you lower yourselves to become patrons, you raise yourselves.” This charge of toadyism might have more weight if it did not come from Diderot, a flatterer of Catherine the Great whom he held to be a great despot, through Voltaire, who flattered both Frederick and Catherine, while judging both to be despotic. In addition, Diderot’s conflict with Rousseau turned on the question of patronage; Rousseau’s reluctance to accept court patronage, which Diderot thought a failure of duty to his children and their mother, and his ingratitude to his *patronne*, Madame d’Épinay. Rousseau wrote to his patron and protector Lamoignon de Malesherbes that “every benefit demands gratitude; and I feel my heart to be ungrateful from the very fact alone that gratitude is a duty.” Diderot (1969–73: XIII [ERCN] 360) cited Rousseau’s letter to Malesherbes, and claimed that Rousseau had told him many times that he hated benefactors because benefactions engender unbearable duties of reciprocation, to support his view that Rousseau was “a prodigy of ingratitude,” truly “satanic” in his proud ingratitude, the chief vice from the perspective of Seneca’s *De beneficiis*, which Diderot thought to be “sublime,” “divine” and “celestial,” surpassing all of Seneca’s other writings in its fecundity (Diderot 1969–73: XII [EVSP] 690, 696; XIII [ERCN] 474, 545). Viewed from the perspective that Diderot judged Rousseau, La Mettrie was properly grateful to Frederick, who had given him protection after he had been hounded from France for his materialist philosophy, after repairing the body parts of the French wounded at the Battle of Fontenoy. Diderot was inconsistent in taxing his fellow plebeian Rousseau for ingratitude and La Mettrie for being a court jester. Let us look at La Mettrie’s notorious writings, which earned him the enmity of the French court and *les lumières*.

La Mettrie was and is best known for his *L’Homme-machine* (1747) where he extended Descartes’s view that animals were machines to include the human animal. (La Mettrie was to discover his forerunner Hobbes in the next year.) But it was his *Anti-Sénèque ou Le souverain bien* (1748) that earned him the distaste of his fellow materialists, D’Holbach and Diderot. In his treatise *Anti-Sénèque*, La Mettrie (1996: 123), perhaps relying on his memory of the battlefields at Fontenoy and perhaps trying to upstage his philosophic rivals, declared that opium has provided “more happiness to us than the treatises of all the philosophers.” His philosophic treatise was an assault on Stoicism but began with a fair assessment of Seneca and Stoic doctrine: “Seneca, the most illustrious of the Stoics, or rather of the Eclectics (for he was Epicurean and Stoic at the same time, and he chose and took what he found best in each sect), added the knowledge of truth” to Stoic ideals of virtue and honor. He then provided his understanding of Stoic doctrine. Stoicism teaches humans to live peacefully, without desire of ambition, disdainful of property, “to be master of one’s passions rather than their slave, to possess a strong soul in a weak body [...] to disdain pleasure and sensuality,” dismissing wealth and pleasure, fear and anxiety in order “to achieve virtue by a knowledge of the truth – all these things constitute

the Sovereign Good of Seneca and the Stoics in general and the perfect bliss which follows from it” (La Mettrie 1996: 119). He then swung into high gear:

But we shall be anti-Stoics! Those philosophers are sad, strict and unyielding; we shall be cheerful, sweet-natured and indulgent. They are all soul and ignore their bodies; we shall be all body and ignore our souls. They appear impervious to pleasure or pain; we shall glory in feeling both.

La Mettrie championed *volupté* as the mean between short urgent sensual pleasure (*plaisir*) and unattainable permanent happiness (*bonheur*). There is no good “as exquisite as the great pleasure of love,” the “more long-lasting, delicious, enticing, uninterrupted and untroubled this feeling is, the happier one is.” However, “Seneca was unhappy and he wrote about happiness as one writes for a lost dog. It is true that he was a Stoic, a sort of leper well armed against the pleasures of life” (La Mettrie 1996: 126).

Nature destined humans to aspire for happiness but virtue is not essential for happiness; vicious thugs are as likely to be happy as Stoic philosophers if they are physiologically well constituted. Conscience and remorse are the offspring of prejudice: they are useless and harmful since they do not restrain the vicious but poison the pleasures of the virtuous (La Mettrie 1996: 137–8, 141–2). La Mettrie’s view that good and evil have no relationship to happiness was fundamentally what aroused the ire of both D’Holbach and Diderot. D’Holbach insisted that La Mettrie “reasoned on morals as a real madman [*vrai frénétique*].” Nature, D’Holbach thought, demonstrates “that vice is an evil and that virtue is a real good.” D’Holbach did not blame the Epicurean philosophy of La Mettrie and cited Seneca’s *De vita beata*: “Ita non ab Epicuro impulsus luxuriantur, sed, vitiis dediti, luxuriam suam in philosophiae sinu abscondunt” – “It was not Epicurus who drove them to debauchery, but, having given themselves over to vice, they hide their debauchery within his philosophy” (Holbach 1966: II 343–4). D’Holbach thought enlightened individuals (as distinct from the common people who are always subject to the tutelage of priests) had no need of a supernatural source of moral conduct. Nature indeed decrees that one seek happiness but one will not find it unless one is compassionate to the unfortunate; beneficent to the needy; sociable, to ease the burdens of life; a good parent, so that one’s children will take care of one in one’s dotage; just, because equity is the prop of the human species; good, because goodness binds human hearts; restrained, moderate and chaste, because voluptuousness, intemperance and excess are destructive and despicable; a good citizen, because one’s country is essential to one’s security and well-being (Holbach 1966: II 410). Sociability will earn one the esteem that is essential to happiness, as vice will be censured by fellow members of society. Seneca’s teaching, contrary to Mandeville’s and La Mettrie’s championship of vice, is that natural law fosters virtue.

Diderot shared D’Holbach’s view that La Mettrie was an apologist for vice and a detractor of virtue (Diderot 1969–73: XII [*EVSP*] 641; XIII [*ERCN*] 463–4). Although La Mettrie praised Seneca for being eclectic, Diderot thought La Mettrie had distinguished Stoicism and Epicureanism too sharply and presented too severe a portrait of Seneca and his teaching. Diderot did seem to side with La Mettrie when he wrote: “There is in Stoicism a monkish spirit that displeases me” but went on to say that “it is however a philosophy to bring to court, near the Great, in the exercise of their public functions, or it is a lost voice that cries in the desert” (Diderot 1969–73: XIII [*ERCN*] 466). Diderot’s Seneca was neither John the Baptist denouncing corruption in the wilderness, nor the solitary savage Jean-Jacques. Nevertheless, it is difficult to distinguish La Mettrie from Diderot’s Seneca as court philosophers.

## Diderot and Rousseau

Diderot and Rousseau were once the closest of friends but became enemies over the issue of patronage, the obligations owing to patrons and the responsibilities owing to one's family. Rousseau attempted to live in the manner of the philosopher depicted in Diderot's celebrated *Le neveu de Rameau*. After Rameau's nephew recounts all the degrading hoops he has to jump through to please his patron, the philosopher (*Moi*) responds that there is only one life of independence: "It is the philosopher who has nothing and asks for nothing." *Moi* cites Diogenes who lived like a savage from nature "from the earth, animals, fish, trees, roots and streams" (Diderot 1969–73: VIII 407–8). To be sure, Diderot neither desired nor Rousseau ever achieved this godlike self-sufficiency that enabled Diogenes to live without patrons but it is significant that Diderot appeared to have espoused this illusory goal. Indeed, the conduct of the vice-ridden and patron-pleasing nephew was attributed by Roland Desné (1972: 60) and Jacques Proust (1962: 328) to the deplorable doctrine of the materialist doctor La Mettrie, which Diderot and his friends thought led to vice.

Rousseau's savage, in his prize-winning *Discours sur les arts et les sciences* (1750), enjoyed "the perfect quietude of the Stoic." This work, which Diderot claimed was his idea – namely, that Rousseau should oppose the progress of the arts and sciences because all the other competitors for the prize would praise their progress – and which Rousseau came to after a revelation on his way to console his very unstoical friend incarcerated in Vincennes, launched his career as a *lumière* critical of enlightenment. Diderot preferred Rousseau's next work, *Discours sur l'inégalité* (1755), because it was more Epicurean (Brooke 2012: 189). Rousseau frequently cited Seneca favorably but was inclined to the more republican Stoicism of the two Catos, Brutus and Cicero. Besides the political difference of republican and monarchical Stoicism, Rousseau differed philosophically from D'Holbach, Diderot and La Mettrie with respect to determinism and free will, and with the *lumières* on the role of conscience and reason in moral and political conduct. Rousseau (1964: 64) declared his moral populism in his *Discours sur les arts et les sciences*: conscience is "the sublime science of simple souls." In his latest works, such as *Émile et Sophie, ou Les Solitaires* (1781), Rousseau pronounced an anti-enlightenment dictum: "Our own conscience is the most enlightened philosopher." In the *Quatrième promenade* of his *Rêveries* (1782), Rousseau declared that he relied on "the dictates of my conscience rather than the lights of my reason." Diderot found Rousseau's conscience to be antinomian and unreliable; "What," he demanded, "is the voice of conscience without the authority and menace of laws" (Diderot 1969–73: XIV 251)? He and his enlightened contemporaries championed a morality of rational self-interest and the rule of law, buttressed by the desire for social approbation and the fear of social censure.

Moreover, in emphasizing human distinctiveness with respect to free will and the capacity for perfection, Rousseau indicates the human capacity to depart from nature, either alienating us from nature where we live only in the eyes of others, hence degrading us below noble savages, or raising us to a lofty level in the republic of the general will. Rousseau's moral freedom (*Du contrat social* 1.8) consists in obeying those moral rules we make for ourselves; autonomous citizens are bound by neither divine nor natural law but only by those rules that come from all and apply to all – no monarchic or aristocratic legislation, no privileges or exemptions from the rule of law. Kant, whom others have called a Stoic for his morality of strict duty regardless of interests or inclinations, called Rousseau the Newton of the moral realm, the first to demonstrate the moral laws of human freedom. The question is whether Rousseau's and Kant's moral autonomy is more faithful to Stoic doctrine than Diderot and D'Holbach's fidelity to the natural laws of a determinate universe. Or perhaps the question of

fidelity to Stoic doctrine is irrelevant since Rousseau and Diderot were not scholars intent on a correct interpretation of ancient doctrines but thinkers who mined ancient doctrines for their own rhetorical and political purposes. Nevertheless, the question remains: are moral laws to be discovered, as D'Holbach and Diderot thought, or are they to be created, as Rousseau and Kant thought? Humanity has a history, according to Rousseau's account of free will and perfectibility, not a given nature from which we can gather moral prescriptions. Rousseau's moral freedom is the expression of will – a repudiation of reason, in the eyes of D'Holbach and Diderot – and opens our being up to historical and circumstantial conditioning of human character and to politically willed transformations of human nature.

Despite the apparent Stoicism of Rousseau's and Kant's doctrine of moral autonomy, that is, the subordination of instinct, sensuous appetite and natural inclination to duty, justice and law, this doctrine marks more of a break with classical Stoicism than the determinist naturalism or Epicurean Stoicism of D'Holbach and Diderot. The Greek Stoics had no word for the Latin *voluntas*, the French *volonté*, the German *Wille*, or the English *will*. To be sure, Epictetus's *Discourses* followed Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in emphasizing the role of "choice" or "deliberated desire" (*prohairesis*) in human conduct. But will in the sense of a faculty distinct from reason and desire was not present in the early Stoics, and only became fundamental in Christianity. Our moral choices take on more weight with doctrines of personal immortality; choosing to sin consigns one to hell, while choosing the narrow path of righteousness leads to heaven. With its emphasis on the afterlife, and of the urgency to choose between heaven and hell, Christianity needed the notion of "free will" in a way that Stoicism did not. In *De civitate Dei* (14.6), Saint Augustine wrote: "Man's will, then, is all-important. If it is badly directed, the emotions will be perverse; if it is rightly directed, the emotions will be not merely blameless but even praiseworthy." In this criticism of Stoic doctrines of *apatheia* or mastery of desire, fear, joy and grief, Saint Augustine's centrality of will marks a departure from earlier Stoic doctrine (Brooke 2012: 4–5), even if the unpredictable interventions of God's grace render "free will" problematic all over again.

Although Rousseau's *Confessions* may be the antithesis of Saint Augustine's *Confessions* since the former repudiates original sin or asserts the original goodness of men and the latter endorses it or asserts the innate depravity of men, there may be an Augustinian dimension in Rousseau's emphasis on a moral will not subservient to passion or self-interest. That is, perhaps Rousseau was less pagan than Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, La Mettrie, Helvétius and D'Holbach or more of a Protestant than his fellow *lumières*. While I cannot support my belief that Rousseau was a Christian here, I might fall back on a sociological sense of Protestant in the spirit of George Santayana's remark to Bertrand Russell that they might both be atheists but he was a Catholic atheist and Russell was a Protestant atheist. The categories of Rousseau's and Kant's moral philosophy (free will, moral autonomy, conscience) are Protestant, while the categories of Diderot's and D'Holbach's thought (reason, heteronomy, natural law) are Catholic atheism or paganism. Stoicism is stretched quite thin to comprehend both Rousseau's autonomous will and Diderot's deterministic naturalism but nevertheless it did serve both thinkers' versions of modern natural right.

### **Diderot's Seneca**

While both Diderot and David Hume prided themselves on their Stoicism, they evinced a panic fear of the power of Rousseau's pen. Anticipating Rousseau's *Confessions*, the normally placid Hume attempted to get his own side of his unhappy relationship with Rousseau, in *Exposé succinct de la contestation qu'est élevée entre M. Hume et M. Rousseau*, published in 1766



with the assistance of Voltaire and D'Alembert, despite the good advice of Adam Smith who thought relationships rarely break down when only one party is at fault and who told Hume that it would bring no credit to himself if he published his *Exposé*. After chronicling Rousseau's emotional sensitivity and imbalance, Hume denounced Rousseau's ingratitude to himself and his other patrons, and concluded with a quotation from Seneca's *De beneficiis* (7.29) to the effect that ungrateful recipients of patronage do not impair the virtue of donors. Diderot's *Essai sur la vie de Sénèque le philosophe* and his *Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron* were an apology for his own life, and a counter to Rousseau's *Confessions*, as well as an apology for the life and work of Seneca. Diderot insisted that his *Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron* did not intend to lampoon Rousseau despite the many critical comments on Rousseau in his life of Seneca but "it is my apology" (Diderot 1969–73: XIII 361). Diderot had translated Plato's Socratic *Apology* when he was incarcerated in Vincennes but he was hardly as Stoical as the pre-Stoical Socrates. Diderot "recanted his work, gave away the name of his publisher, his bookseller, and that of his mistress and partner in crime, the writer Mme de Puisieux." Later when he came to write his *Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron*, the role of Socrates, Elena Russo observed, was taken up by Rousseau in public opinion, and hence "Diderot's Seneca was thus a *pis-aller*; a makeshift role model appropriate to a tainted philosopher who had several times bowed to necessity, played the game, and recanted his ideas" (Russo 2009: 9–10). Seneca had abjectly begged to be returned to Rome after being exiled to Corsica by Claudius, and the parallels between Diderot's and Seneca's life hardly stop there. Seneca was a *novus homo* who made his fortune in the capital, as Diderot was a provincial bourgeois who moved to Paris to make his fortune. Diderot defended Seneca (and himself) for taking benefactions from Nero and becoming extremely wealthy, while praising virtuous poverty (Griffin 1976: 286), by denouncing Diderot's contemporaries in the republic of letters who criticized Seneca but not those of senatorial rank for becoming rich in Nero's era. "Where does this partiality arise from? I know it: it is because they are only the Great, and that Seneca was a sage" (Diderot 1969–73: XIII [ERCN] 407). Diderot was a plebeian from the provinces, a sage who tutored and had taken patronage from a tyrant, and who did not think wealth was the exclusive property of birth and social standing.

Although he thought Seneca's *De beneficiis* was the profoundest of his works, Diderot did criticize Seneca for saying that graceful giving and receiving could be compared to a courtesan's art of providing spicy favors, varying them according to the wishes of her patrons (Diderot 1969–73: XII [EVSP] 691), and also Seneca's view that one could not refuse a gift from a tyrant. Diderot grandly asserted that the philosopher prefers death to compliance with tyranny (Diderot 1969–73: XII [EVSP] 672; XIII [ERCN] 345, 455). However, not only did he recant to Bourbon despotism but also he whitewashed Catherine the Great's accession to power, after the death of her husband Peter, and the heir to the Russian throne, Ivan. Together with Voltaire, Diderot suppressed the French ambassador, Claude Carloman de Rulhière's account of Catherine's *coup d'état* (Lentin 1974: 14; Russo 2009: 10). Just as Seneca's patron, Agrippina murdered her husband, Claudius, and employed the philosopher as spin doctor and as tutor to her son Nero, Catherine employed Voltaire and Diderot as public relations officers and offered Diderot's friend, Jean d'Alembert, vast sums to tutor Catherine's son. D'Alembert turned down the position, saying that he was prone to hemorrhoids and that he had heard that this malady was fatal in Russia – Catherine had claimed that her husband had died from this ignominious affliction. Diderot was less well off than Voltaire and D'Alembert and thus was induced to attend Catherine's court. Frederick the Great wrote to Voltaire on 24 May 1770 that Diderot was guilty of more than the trifling crime of covering up Catherine's usurpation; namely, he (and not only he) was paid to justify Russian imperialism in the Balkans and Poland.

Diderot (1969–73: XIII 324) made the extraordinary suggestion that the tutors of princes should be elected by the people, despite his view that the untutored voice of the people is stupid and wicked (506). He probably just meant to draw attention to the importance of tutors to sovereigns. “Two great philosophers were two great educators: Aristotle raised Alexander; Seneca raised Nero” (518). Diderot was uncomfortable about the results of Seneca’s tutelage. Nero, he claimed, was born bad but was improved by Seneca’s education. He justified Nero killing his mother and Seneca’s patron, Agrippina (368), and asserts that Nero was a good emperor in the first five of his twelve-year reign (328). Even though Nero became a tyrant, Diderot asserted that Seneca was innocent of Nero’s charge of conspiracy against him for which he was sentenced to death. Diderot justified the sexagenarian Seneca who took a teenage bride and allowed her to join him in his authorized suicide (402, 421).

Diderot was emphatic that Seneca was wrong to assert that one could not refuse a favor from a tyrant, even though Diderot knew Catherine, like Nero, was a tyrant (Diderot 1969–73: XI 537; Russo 2009: 11). However, tyrannicide might produce more chaos than the continued rule of the tyrant. Philosophers can offer Stoical advice to the subjects of a tyrant; namely, “man is exposed to misfortune and anguish; the philosopher teaches man to suffer” (Diderot 1969–73: XIII, 492). Nevertheless, the philosopher, while obedient to even tyrannical authority, has the duty to speak or write freely on matters of religion, morals and politics. It is cowardly to silence the truth (455); indeed, “what is the point of philosophy if it remains silent? Either speak up, or renounce the title of educator of the human race. It is your destiny to be persecuted; people will see you drink hemlock” (513–4) as Socrates did but Diderot did not. Catherine did not allow her subjects to read anything written by her protégés, Diderot and Voltaire. Diderot recommended “a useful and great idea” of D’Alembert’s, that men of letters should leave a will where they can write freely what conscience dictates unrestrained by the fear and circumspection essential in despotic regimes; writers would then be able “to ask pardon of their century for only having a posthumous sincerity” (464). Diderot’s works on Seneca were then an apology for his life as the beneficiary of tyranny as well as an accusation of Satanic pride and ingratitude on the part of his former friend Rousseau.

## Conclusion

The French Enlightenment espoused Stoicism for providing a naturalistic basis of morality to supersede Christian belief in the supernatural identity of human beings, the destiny of the immortal soul, and divine rewards and punishments in the hereafter. Most of the *philosophes* advocated a less austere form of Stoicism than that presented in Diogenes’s life of Zeno. The mainstream of the *lumières* (Diderot, D’Holbach and Helvétius) espoused laws of nature that guided moral conduct, and thus found La Mettrie’s amoral hedonism repugnant, despite the fact they shared his determinist naturalism and his view that the pursuit of pleasure animates all human endeavor. They differed from La Mettrie in thinking that, besides fear of the public executioner, social approbation and censure could prevent antisocial activities; the desire for glory or simply social esteem will induce persons to serve the public good. Nor did Diderot, Helvétius and D’Holbach think Rousseau’s conscience to be an infallible inner light or reliable guide to conduct. Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* entry on *conscience* indicated that its common usage is antinomian and the only rational meaning of the word is “what the English express by the word *consciousness*,” and they lamented, “can only be rendered in French by periphrasis” (Davies 1990: 44–50). Nor did they trust Rousseau’s public conscience as laws willed by all and applicable to all. In opposition to Rousseau, *les lumières* were

not populists. Diderot (1969–73: XIII [ERCN] 506) baldly declared that people need enlightenment from above. “The man of the people is the stupidest and wickedest of men; to make men less common [*se dépopulariser*] or make men better, that is the same thing. The voice of the philosopher who counters that of the people is the voice of reason.” The Rousseauan or Kantian notion of moral autonomy, of rules made by will rather than discovered by reason, seemed to *les lumières* to cast off the anchors of natural law, to pursue an illusory transformation of human nature, no longer limited by natural attachments to life, liberty, property and happiness or the commodious life made possible by commerce. The Protestant Stoicism of Rousseau, however much it aimed to recreate classical republicanism, marked a radical break from classical Stoicism, from natural law comprehensible to human reason. Rousseau was the radical innovator who supplanted human nature with history as the fundamental category of political philosophy.

### Note

- 1 By epicurean, I mean just the popular sense of holding sensual pleasure to be a good, with property or wealth as means of achieving that good. I do not mean that Epicurus deprecated intellectual pleasures or virtues, such as prudence and moderation. The word “epicurean” in common usage owes as much to Stoic critics of Epicurus as to the teachings of Epicurus himself. Epictetus (*Diss.* 3.24.38) asserted that those who hold pleasure as the end of life are “Epicureans and catamites.” Contrary to Epictetus, Epicurus apparently lived a highly temperate life and I think D’Holbach was right to think that Epicurus would have disavowed his follower, La Mettrie. Ancient hedonism may be different from modern hedonism in its emphasis on the quality, not quantity of pleasure, on the avoidance of pain or disturbance of mind rather than the active pursuit of pleasure, and thus prudence imposes limits or restraints on the restless, immoderate pursuit of pleasure.

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## 18

# STOICISM AND THE SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT

*Christian Maurer*

Much of intellectual life in eighteenth-century Scotland is marked by the phenomenon nowadays called the “Scottish Enlightenment” – a flourishing exchange of ideas in a quite remarkably tolerant public space, involving thinkers interested in topics like philosophy, ethics, religion, psychology, history, law, politics, the natural sciences and the arts. Many shared a belief in the possibility of improving the world in both natural and moral matters. Some famous authors associated with the Scottish Enlightenment are Francis Hutcheson, David Hume and Adam Smith (to whom this chapter is going to devote much attention), Hugh Blair, George Campbell, Adam Ferguson, Henry Home (Lord Kames), Thomas Reid, William Robertson and Dugald Stewart.

Scotland before the Enlightenment was not devoid of interest in classical antiquity, yet during the eighteenth century one can identify an increased interest in Greek and Latin authors – in particular in the Stoics and Cicero, and slightly less so in the Epicureans and the Skeptics (Harris 2009: 161). When analyzing the implicit influence of Stoic ideas upon thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment and their explicit treatment of the Stoics, one should bear in mind two risks. One is to see “Stoics” or “Neostoics” too readily, for example by stretching nomenclature and calling someone a Stoic just in virtue of ambiguous commonplace statements in favor of controlling the passions or against the pursuit of riches, for a view of human nature as sociable, or for considering virtue as something not unpleasant. One should be similarly careful with the loose use of concepts in eighteenth-century polemics. The second, opposite danger is to rely on far too rigid classifications, which would render invisible interesting influences, proximities and overlaps between early modern and ancient thinkers, keeping us from understanding how ideas were used in new contexts for new purposes.

Given the absence of systematic attempts to rebuild a Stoic philosophy, it may not be apposite to speak of the presence of genuine Stoicism in the Scottish Enlightenment. With the famous exception of Hume, however, many Scottish thinkers undeniably expressed positive views of some (but not all) Stoic philosophers, and of some (but not all) of the central Stoic tenets. Some of these they appear to have integrated into their new philosophies in more or less eclectic ways, often motivated by the Enlightenment’s interest in a Science of Man. The favorite sources seem to have been Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus and Cicero rather than Seneca, Zeno and Diogenes Laertius, and inspiration was found in Stoic moral philosophy rather than cosmology, theology or logic.

It is equally often noted that the Scottish Enlightenment was quite open to Christianity – again with the well-known exception of Hume, and in contrast to the French Enlightenment. Many thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment spent some considerable effort on showing the compatibility of certain Stoic principles with certain Christian ones. Commentators thus frequently characterize the Scottish Enlightenment as marked by “Christian Stoicism.”<sup>1</sup> This seems not inappropriate, yet the notion of Stoicism is notoriously vague, and Christianity underwent fiery debates on orthodoxy – questions about providence, predestination, mankind’s moral status, the nature of God and Christ, the interpretation of the scriptures and the sacraments, the status of revelation, and many others frequently provoked more than just polite debates among theologians only. It is therefore crucial to ask *which* variety or principles of Christianity were conjoined with *which* variety or principles of Stoicism. Answering such questions becomes even more pressing if one takes into account that during the seventeenth century, a common view was that Christianity and Stoicism were strictly incompatible: Scottish Calvinists, and Augustinians elsewhere in Europe, suspected Stoicism of being a heresy that contradicted fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, or even of being a type of atheism.<sup>2</sup> This contrast suggests that a significant shift must have taken place so that a “Christian Stoicism” could become the acceptable background it was for many during the Scottish Enlightenment.

### **Christianity and Stoicism in Scotland before the Enlightenment**

Seventeenth-century Scottish philosophy bears many marks of Calvinism’s struggle over orthodoxy. One landmark of seventeenth-century Scottish Reformed efforts towards doctrinal unity is the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, adopted by the Kirk in 1647 (see Church of Scotland 1728). This document held an important place in Scotland far beyond the Enlightenment – in spite of various political developments and disputes regarding church government in the seventeenth century, and in spite of a remarkable shift in the eighteenth century towards emphasizing the importance of moral practice over doctrinal orthodoxy. The *Confession* is structured around the Calvinist doctrines of predestination, original sin, postlapsarian corruption and dependence on divine grace for faith, good works and salvation. In the present state we are declared to be “dead in Sin, and wholly defiled in all the Faculties and Parts of Soul and Body,” and “utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all Good, and wholly inclined to all Evil” (*Confession* 6.2, 4). It is not in our power to will the good, to perform truly good works, or to cultivate virtue – moral regeneration and salvation is achieved through saving faith only, which cannot be merited or achieved through our own efforts (*Confession* 11.3; 16.7). It is the work of divine grace, freely bestowed by God on the few predestined elect. To think that human efforts towards moral self-improvement would make one truly better is to fall prey to Pelagian or Arminian heresy, and to insist on the power of human reason as a help for salvation is Socinianism. Our nature, our faculties, and in particular the passions are corrupt and must be denied.

In seventeenth-century Scotland, academic and non-academic philosophers were surrounded by Calvinist doctrines, and if they did not endorse them, they had to confront them in ways that avoided more serious problems. In numerous Latin *theses philosophicae* written by university regents, the sections on moral philosophy contain references to the above-mentioned Calvinist doctrines. Discussions of Aristotle’s and Descartes’s ethics, for example, are often followed by critical reactions to these philosophers’ ignorance or undue neglect of the fall.<sup>3</sup> Outside the academic context, the non-renouncing Covenanter and first Lord Arniston James Dundas (1620–1679) penned a manuscript entitled *Idea philosophiae moralis* (Dundas 1679), developing

a profoundly Calvinist moral philosophy. Dundas jointly criticizes Seneca and Descartes for contradicting the doctrine of the fall and proclaiming that it is in our power to be virtuous and happy (Broadie forthcoming).

The relation between Stoicism and Christianity (in the understanding of orthodox Calvinism) is knotty. On the one hand, one might find quite significant thematic overlaps: most importantly, both strongly insist on the rejection of, say, things commonly thought valuable – such as riches, honor and life (the Stoic “externals”). Both highlight the importance of other, truly valuable goods, combined with a practical emphasis on self-command and self-denial, and with a negative view of the passions. One might furthermore want to detect overlaps in their views regarding determinism, fate, predestination and providence – an uncomfortable point that Calvinists undertake substantial intellectual efforts to reject, however. Also, one might wish to relate the Stoic *hêgemonikon* to a Christian conception of natural conscience, explaining how the Gentiles could be “a law unto themselves” (Rom 2:14). If orthodox Calvinists allow for this move, they also insist that not being acquainted with the Bible provides no excuse for sinning against the divine law.<sup>4</sup> One of the most important contrasts with Stoicism signaled by orthodox Calvinists and Augustinians in general concerns the Stoic claim that virtue is in some sense in harmony with our nature. This gives reason too much power and leaves it in the hands of corrupt postlapsarian humans to cultivate virtue, reach genuine happiness, and work towards salvation. On such grounds, the Stoics are often reproached with pride and vanity. In the Scottish Enlightenment, however, the Stoic approach to self-cultivation becomes a very attractive point. Is this a mere shift in emphasis from doctrine towards moral practice, or a genuine rejection of fundamental Calvinist principles?

The academic *theses philosophicae* rarely contain explicit discussions of Stoicism, but where they do, they demonstrate a generally critical attitude. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Stoics are commonly aligned with Hobbes because of their theory of the *fatum* (e.g. Middleton 1675: 21; Boyd 1693: 7), and they get criticized alongside Descartes for their claim that postlapsarian human beings could acquire control over the passions (Forbes 1680: §IX). With the reception in Scotland of the ethics of Descartes and of Cambridge Platonists such as Henry More, another type of criticism appears more frequently, namely the rejection of the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*. Explicitly against the Stoics, and implicitly against Calvinist orthodoxy, the passions are presented as a useful part of human nature which ethics shall teach us how to govern duly (e.g. Middleton 1675: 22; Boyd 1693: 6–7). More’s *Enchiridion ethicum* was present in several Scottish university curricula until the visitation by Presbyterian committees in the 1690s, and it is marked by Stoic ideas, albeit rejecting *apatheia*. The Cambridge Platonists’ treatment of notions like conscience, the *hêgemonikon* and the moral sense, their emphasis on natural sociability and the naturalness of virtue are absorbed by several Scottish academic philosophers, and strongly re-emerge in Hutcheson.

Stoicism may have been viewed rather critically in seventeenth-century Calvinist Scotland, but there are most interesting exceptions, notably Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh (1636/38–1691). In the 1660s, Mackenzie published several collections of non-academic essays that explicitly embrace Stoicism, including *Religio Stoici* (1663), *Solitude prefer’d to Publick Employment* (1665) and *The Moral History of Frugality: With Its Opposite Vices* (1691). Besides writing on traditional Stoic themes – arguing that virtue is its own reward, and that it is easier to be virtuous than vicious – Mackenzie’s engagement with Stoicism in *Religio Stoici* is heavily concerned with the tensions between Scottish Presbyterians and Episcopalians. Mackenzie criticizes “the Doctrine of Predestination, as some teach it; wherein they well have Man to play the mere Spectator in his own Salvation” (Mackenzie 1713: 19). Mackenzie instead wants to preserve our power and responsibility, and claims that each creature has

“innate Qualities, sufficient to act every thing requisite for its Substance” (ibid.), with God keeping a “Prerogative Royal, a Power to bend and bow these Inclinations upon extraordinary Occasions, for the Good of the Universe” (Mackenzie 1713: 20). Such a position “seems to suit best with the Principles, both of Christianity and Stoicism. With Christianity, because it gives a Check to Presumption, and suffers not Man to think himself the sole Arbitrer of his own Condition,” and “with Stoicism, because it pulls the Hands of a Sluggard from his Bosom, and sets them at Work to prepare for himself, and not to repose his unreasonable Hopes upon Divine Providence; which only keeps those from sinking, who endeavour to swim” (ibid.).

### **At the dawn of the Enlightenment: Stoicism and Christianity in Hutcheson’s ethics of benevolence**

The Scottish eighteenth century appears to be much more favorable to Stoic ideas than the seventeenth century, albeit not univocally so. The philosophy of Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), who is sometimes controversially called the “father” of the Scottish Enlightenment, makes manifest some important developments in the early eighteenth century. Hutcheson’s interest in Stoic ideas is most prominent in his treatment of the passions, their cultivation and their relation to virtue, in the question of the moral faculty, and the question of providence. Originally from Ireland, Hutcheson studied in Glasgow under the moral philosopher Gershom Carmichael and the controversial unorthodox theologian John Simson, succeeding Carmichael in the Glasgow chair of moral philosophy in 1729. It seems that Hutcheson was the first academic moral philosopher in Scotland to adopt a relatively important body of Stoic ideas, together with Carmichael and the Aberdonian George Turnbull.

Like many subsequent proponents of the Scottish Enlightenment, Hutcheson had a lively interest in Shaftesbury’s writings, with which he became acquainted in the Molesworth circle in Dublin. In often strongly Stoic terms, Shaftesbury’s *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) suggest against Hobbes, the Epicureans and others that both selfish and social (or natural) affections – in particular the *storgê* or familial affections – are a natural ingredient of human psychology (Shaftesbury 2001: I 73ff.). Virtue, or moral goodness, requires having these affections in their natural degree, and furthermore a capacity “of forming general Notions of Things,” or a moral sense, which makes the affections the object of reflection (Shaftesbury 2001: II 16). With leanings on the Cambridge Platonists, Shaftesbury expounds a conception of the moral sense as part of a rational faculty, approaching the Stoic *hêgemonikon*, and he rejects Locke’s attack on innate ideas by invoking a *sensus communis* and preconceptions, or *prolēpseis*. Given the belief in a universe ordered by a benevolent Deity for the good of its creatures, the discipline of our desires and emotions, and of the judgments and “fancies” which underlie them, plays a crucial role in Shaftesbury’s moral philosophy, as does the cultivation of moral judgment through philosophizing. Commentators have pointed out that Shaftesbury has an elitist conception of moral virtue, which might be interpreted as another Stoic feature. The extent to which Shaftesbury sees his moral enterprise inspired by Stoicism, especially in the variety of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, becomes even more obvious when one consults his unpublished works, in particular his notebooks, the *Askêmata*, and manuscripts like the *Pathologia*. All over Europe, and throughout the eighteenth century, Shaftesbury’s philosophy was very influential, and he may be considered one of the crucial thinkers through whom Stoic ideas made their way into the Enlightenment.<sup>5</sup>

Hutcheson was furthermore influenced by the Cambridge Platonists (who were in turn very important for Shaftesbury), and by Protestant natural law theory. This latter’s connecting



virtues like justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude to the language of duties to God, others and self, its elaborate accounts of self-cultivation, and its efforts to combine Stoic and Christian ideas, proved particularly fruitful to the transporting of Stoic ideas into early eighteenth-century Scottish moral philosophy. The moral philosophy of Hutcheson's English contemporary Joseph Butler, which incorporated a variety of Stoic elements, most crucially an interpretation of the Stoic conception of virtue as *vita secundum naturam* in his own moral psychology, and a notion of conscience with both Christian and Stoic leanings, also played a role in the development of Hutcheson's philosophy. Hutcheson's affinity with Stoic ideas clarifies some of his criticisms of Bernard Mandeville, the notorious author of *The Fable of the Bees* (1714/1723). Mandeville attacked Shaftesbury and the Stoics in an ambiguous Augustinian tone, insisting on the dominance of pride, vanity and flattery in human nature and society, and on the artificiality of human virtues like honor and politeness.

Hutcheson's moral philosophy influenced much of the Scottish Enlightenment, and his blend of a relatively selective use of Stoic ideas with his interpretation of Christianity reflects some of the fundamental changes in philosophy and religion in the early eighteenth century. In tension with the orthodox emphasis on corruption, Hutcheson insisted on the practical dimension of moral philosophy as an effective guide to self-cultivation, allowing us to "*improve* our natural Powers, and to rectify accidental Disorders incident unto them" (Hutcheson 2002: 4). Hutcheson argues most famously for two claims: firstly, that we have a moral sense indicating the moral value of an action without the necessary interference of reason or education, and secondly, that we are naturally motivated by benevolence in the sense of an ultimately disinterested desire to promote the good of others.

Hutcheson presents this second claim as a refutation of the position that explains every action as ultimately motivated by self-love, a view he attributes to Hobbes, Pufendorf, the Epicureans and the "Christian Moralists" – which may mean the French Augustinians and the Scottish Presbyterians alike (Hutcheson 2002: 134; Maurer 2013: 291ff.). Hutcheson's own view, that there is natural benevolence, he sees endorsed by thinkers like Shaftesbury and the "Antiqui" or ancient moralists – meaning in particular the Stoics and Cicero (Hutcheson 2006: 205; Brooke 2012: 161). Hutcheson thus makes the Stoics precursors of his claim that we are naturally sociable. It is telling, however, that he does not acknowledge that many interpretations of the Stoic *oikeiôsis* mention a psychological primacy of self-preservation – he focuses on the Stoics' emphasis on the reality of other-directed affections, such as the *storgê* and friendship. Hutcheson's interest in the theme of sociability makes him treat Hobbes and the Stoics as opponents, like Shaftesbury, whereas in the dominant seventeenth-century focus on questions of free will and determinism, Hobbes and the Stoics were often grouped together. In any case, given that the Stoics were suspicious from the point of view of orthodox Calvinism, Hutcheson's position seems quite bold, and his claim that benevolence is a natural virtuous tendency – his interpretation of *vita secundum naturam* – creates tensions since it can equal rejecting the doctrines of postlapsarian corruption and dependence on grace.<sup>6</sup>

His claims about the moral sense Hutcheson sees again backed by Shaftesbury and the Stoics. In his inaugural oration *De naturali hominum socialitate* (On the natural sociability of mankind) (1730), Hutcheson uses the Stoic term *hégemonikon* to refer to natural conscience and the moral sense, appropriating the traditions he finds in both Stoicism and Christianity (Hutcheson 2006: 199; Rivers 2000: 213f.; Brooke 2012: 161ff.). Following the Stoics, Shaftesbury and the Cambridge Platonists on this point means again positioning himself against Calvinist orthodoxy, according to whom our corrupt faculties are ineffective in directing us towards the good without the Bible and divine grace. This contrast is most clearly visible in their respective views of the present moral state of human nature, where for

Hutcheson evident signs are preserved that we are “designed for every virtue, for all honest and illustrious things” (Hutcheson 2006: 200). One of the key sources for this positive view of Hutcheson is clearly Stoicism.

Another crucial feature of Hutcheson’s moral philosophy that resonates well with Stoicism is his assertion in the *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* that the “Perfection of Virtue consists in ‘having the *universal calm Benevolence*, the prevalent Affection of the Mind, so as to limit and counteract not only the *selfish Passions*, but even the *particular kind Affections*’” (Hutcheson 2002: 8). Calm universal benevolence towards humanity is the highest virtue, as opposed to passionate partial forms of benevolence such as pity, and calm partial forms of benevolence, such as parental love. This might echo the Stoic cosmopolitanism inherent in the theory of *oikeiôsis*. Partly inspired by the natural law theories of Pufendorf and Carmichael, Hutcheson formulates recommendations for the cultivation of virtue. Violent passions should be stopped from leading into action; opinions should be corrected and assent suspended in cases of uncertainty; benevolence should be strengthened with the support of self-love (Maurer 2010: 42f.). Similarly, the moral sense should be strengthened against potential corruption from custom and education, spirit of faction, false opinions of divine Laws and happiness, or violent passions (Hutcheson 2004: 137–46). Still, Hutcheson’s general confidence in the natural power of the moral sense seems more robust than Shaftesbury’s and the Stoics’, and he attributes reason a more limited role.

In the *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), Hutcheson proposes a calculus for computing the moral value of actions (Hutcheson 2004: 128–32). An agent’s virtue is determined by his benevolent intentions to promote the public good, in proportion to his natural abilities. The perfection of virtue is “when the Being acts to the utmost of his Power for the publick Good” (Hutcheson 2004: 130). Thus, even a quite powerless agent may reach the most perfect virtue – a point Hutcheson links with an interesting reference to the Stoics: “And this may shew us the only Foundation for the boasting of the Stoicks, ‘That a Creature suppos’d Innocent, by pursuing Virtue with his utmost Power, may in Virtue equal the Gods’” (ibid.). Hutcheson’s own, similar claim, which is hardly compatible with the Calvinist doctrine of postlapsarian corruption, is that “no external Circumstances of Fortune, no involuntary Disadvantages, can exclude any Mortal from the most heroick Virtue” (Hutcheson 2004: 134).

In his ethics of benevolence, Hutcheson strictly distinguishes between the natural good or the *utile* (pleasure), and the moral good or the *honestum* (benevolence). The importance of this distinction is highlighted by a quotation from Cicero’s *De officiis* 1.4 on the title page of the *Inquiry* (Hutcheson 2004: 3). Hutcheson argues that the highest pleasures we can experience are those of virtue. The *honestum*, however, is irreducible to the *utile*, as proven by the moral sense: if an action is performed with the goal of experiencing the moral pleasures, these cannot be gained, since the action is not disinterested and thus not an instance of benevolence. Given God’s providence, the two dimensions ultimately coincide in that benevolent actions provide the agent with the pleasures of the moral sense, compensating her for the potential pains involved in virtue (Hutcheson 2002: 106f.). This is Hutcheson’s interpretation of the Stoic idea that virtue is its own reward, or that the *honestum* and the *utile* ultimately converge. Benevolence is so central for Hutcheson that he also analyses the four cardinal virtues in terms of it: these “obtain that Name, because they are Dispositions universally necessary to promote publick Good, and denote Affections toward rational Agents; otherwise there would appear no Virtue in them” (Hutcheson 2004: 102).

Hutcheson’s affinities with some Stoic ideas should not make us think that he endorses all the central Stoic tenets, let alone that he would develop a coherent Neostoic system – James

Moore is right to point out that Hutcheson was “eclectic” in his Stoicism (Moore 2007: 135ff.). Some Stoic ideas about theology, for example, were hardly compatible with Hutcheson’s understanding of Christianity. Regarding moral philosophy, Hutcheson places much less emphasis on reason, and he has a much more favorable view of the emotions, in line with earlier critics of the Stoic teaching on apathy. Referring to Cicero’s presentation of the Stoic theory of the emotions, Hutcheson takes on board the distinction between calm and violent emotions by distinguishing between affections and passions, using however Cicero’s table of the four Stoic *perturbationes* or *pathê* to classify the calm affections, and not mentioning the three *constantiae* or *eupatheiai*. Passions he defines as affections coming with additional “violent *confused Sensations*, connected with *bodily Motions*” (Hutcheson 2002: 51). The outcome is that for Hutcheson, there is a calm, and thus acceptable, affection towards a present evil. This was famously absent from the original Stoic table with only three *constantiae*, which was tied to their distinction in moral ontology between internals and externals (Maurer 2010: 39f.).

This significant deviation dovetails with Hutcheson’s insistence on our natural concern for the well-being of others. Take the example of pity, the emotional reaction upon facing the misery of others: Hutcheson mentions that pity could block reason and motivate harmful actions, but the passion is an expression of our social nature and should thus not be eradicated in self-cultivation. What counts is the right government of our emotions – the ideal of apathy is part of the “Vanity of some of the lower rate Philosophers of the *Stoick Sect*,” whose “boasting of an undisturbed Happiness and Serenity” is inconsistent with the order of nature (Hutcheson 2002: 83). Virtue involves being vulnerable to the well-being of others.

Hutcheson’s attempt to combine Christian ideas with what he sees as the Stoic emphasis on natural sociability is most apparent in his and James Moor’s anonymously published edition of *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antonius* (1742). Hutcheson and Moor see the *Meditations* as inciting “a constant inflexible charity, and good-will and compassion toward our fellows” (Hutcheson and Moor 2008: 3). They align Marcus Aurelius’s references to the *hégemonikon* with conscience and the moral sense, stress the theme of governing the passions and cultivating virtue, and highlight his confidence in the goodness and sociability of human nature. The emperor’s humble submission to providence, and his conception of the universe as a system ordered by a beneficent deity for the ultimate good of its creatures is regularly highlighted. One of Hutcheson’s notes explains that “many evils are even requisite means of reclaiming the less perfect beings from their vices, and setting them upon the pursuit of their truest happiness” (Hutcheson and Moor 2008: 64 n.). In the *Essay*, Hutcheson wrote, referring to Simplicius on Epictetus: “We know that our State is *absolutely Good*, notwithstanding a considerable Mixture of Evil” (Hutcheson 2002: 43). Regarding Christianity more specifically, Hutcheson and Moor’s Introduction deplores the persecutions of Christians by Christians, mentions the Apostle Paul’s own persecutions, and stresses the importance of morality over doctrine, which is the tone of much of the Scottish Enlightenment:

’Tis needless, I hope, to prevent another silly prejudice; as if because the author was not a Christian, he could have no real piety or virtue acceptable to God, none of these divine influences, which we are taught are necessary to every good work.

(Hutcheson and Moore 2008: 21f.)<sup>7</sup>

### The Skeptic Hume on the Stoics and religion

Hutcheson’s moral philosophy and his blend of Stoic and Christian ideas contributed to shaping the Scottish Enlightenment. His optimistic view of human nature as naturally

benevolent and capable of cultivating virtue, his semi-Stoic treatment of the passions, his account of providence, his interpretation of the possibility of being happy relatively independent of one's circumstances thanks to the pleasures of the moral sense, his understanding of the Stoic dictum that virtue is to live according to our benevolent nature, and his emphasis on a dichotomy between Epicureans and Stoics regarding the reality of benevolence constituted much of the background from which authors like Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, Hugh Blair and others continued their philosophical efforts. If commentators generally agree that the Scottish Enlightenment was characterized by a blend of Christian and Stoic ideas, they also agree that David Hume (1711–76) is an exception to this trend – both regarding Christianity and Stoicism. Hume's epistemology is marked by Skeptic ideas, broadly speaking. This affects his moral philosophy, and his writings on religion suggest that he was at least very critical of the central tenets of Christianity. In general, when it comes to positioning Hume with respect to ancient thinkers, he is seen in proximity of the Epicureans or the Skeptics, and as a critic of Stoicism (Harris 2009: 163f.).

The philosophical and personal differences and tensions between the “Skeptic” Hume and the “Christian Stoic” Hutcheson have been widely discussed. Hume's confidence in human sociability and benevolence is much more limited than Hutcheson's, and his conception of virtue and the moral sense make room for features Hutcheson rejects. Moore (2007: 162) points out Hume's aspiration to be a truthful “anatomist” rather than a “painter” of human nature, his treating natural abilities like intelligence and good humor as virtues, and not just benevolence, his linking the moral sense to sympathy, and his conception of justice as an artificial virtue rather than as grounded on natural benevolence. Such differences also emerge in their respective views of Stoic ideas. Commentators have discussed how Hume's interpretation of Cicero's *honestum* as humanity in the sense of a faint “feeling for others that links all mankind in an aversion to cruelty” differs from Hutcheson's understanding of the *honestum* as benevolence, that is the desire to promote the public good (Moore 2002: 385; Harris 2009: 173).

A passage from the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1748) will serve to introduce Hume's criticisms of Stoic moral philosophy:

It is certain, that, while we aspire to the magnanimous firmness of the philosophic sage, and endeavour to confine our pleasures altogether within our own minds, we may, at last, render our philosophy like that of *Epictetus*, and other *Stoics*, only a more refined system of selfishness, and reason ourselves out of all virtue, as well as social enjoyment.

(Hume 2000: 35)

Hume takes up the Augustinian criticism that the Stoic system is ultimately selfish and morally problematic, yet the target is different. Rather than denouncing the vanity of the Stoics' confidence in self-cultivation, Hume points at the problematic dimensions of the ideal of apathy. Discussing the Stoic attitude to compassion and humanity, Hume's later-withdrawn essay *Of Moral Prejudices* attacks the treatment of pity by Epictetus – in a similar tone Hutcheson used when speaking only of the “lower Stoicks”:

When your Friend is in Affliction, says *Epictetus*, you may counterfeit a Sympathy with him, if it give him Relief; but take Care not to allow any Compassion to sink into your Heart, or disturb that Tranquility, which is the Perfection of Wisdom.

(Hume 1987: 540)

Similarly, the fourth Appendix to the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751) accuses Epictetus of having “scarcely ever mentioned the sentiment of humanity and compassion, but in order to put his disciples on their guard against it” (Hume 2006: 107). Many moral philosophers who, like Hutcheson, tied their accounts of morality to principles like sympathy or benevolence (which are in some cases presented as “Christian” principles) might have agreed that the conception of virtue presented by *some* Stoics requires a too detached and morally problematic stance towards our fellow human beings. Hume, however, directs his criticism against the central Stoic figure Epictetus himself, and not just against some “lower Stoicks.”

More generally, Hume criticizes the effects of the

grave philosophic Endeavour after Perfection, which, under Pretext of reforming Prejudices and Errors, strikes at all the most endearing Sentiments of the Heart, and all the most useful Byasses and Instincts, which can govern a human Creature. The *Stoics* were remarkable for this Folly among the Antients; and I wish some of more venerable Characters in latter Times had not copy'd them too faithfully in this Particular.

(Hume 1987: 539; see also M. Stewart 1991: 285f.; Moore 2007: 156f.)

The *philosophical ideals* of the Stoics, who want us to eradicate some of the most natural “Sentiments of the Heart,” such as compassion and humanity, are to be condemned – Hume’s conception of human nature does not accord with their perfectionism. From a different angle, Hume alludes to the Stoics’ vanity in the *Natural History of Religion* (1757), where he reproaches them for having bestowed “many magnificent and even impious epithets on their sage, that he alone was rich, free, a king, and equal to the immortal gods” (Hume 1998, 174; see also M. Stewart 1991: 287; Brooke 2012: 179f.).

Hume also expresses serious doubts about the *practicability* of Stoicism, since too much power is attributed to reason, the weakness of which Hume emphasizes throughout his philosophy. In the frequently discussed *Letter to a Physician* (1734), allegedly written after a mental breakdown, Hume points out the negative influence of the Stoic ideal of self-cultivation on our lives.<sup>8</sup> He writes how, impressed by Cicero, Seneca and Plutarch’s

beautiful Representations of Virtue & Philosophy, I undertook the Improvement of my Temper & Will, along with my Reason & Understanding. I was continually fortifying myself with Reflections against Death, & Poverty, & Shame, & Pain, & all the other Calamities of Life.

(Hume 2011: 14)

The crucial theme is the rejection of externals such as riches, life and health as indifferent, and the exclusive focus on the internal good of virtue, which is advertised in Stoic therapy and self-cultivation. In an active life, such ideas might serve as guidelines, but “in Solitude they serve to little other Purpose, than to waste the Spirits” (ibid.). This dovetails with Hume’s general criticism that the Ancient moralists philosophized “without regarding human Nature” (ibid.: 16).

The unnatural Stoic ideals of self-perfection have their equivalent on the side of religion, where Hume rejects the problematic moral consequences of equally unnatural “monkish” (and Calvinist) virtues like self-denial and humility (Hume 2006: 73; 1998: 163). In *A Dialogue*, Hume writes about the Augustinian Pascal that he “made constant profession of humility and abasement, of the contempt and hatred of himself; and endeavoured to attain these supposed

virtues, as far as they are attainable” (Hume 2006: 122). Pascal’s austerities, and his rejection of even the most innocent pleasures ultimately lead to an artificial life, departing from the maxims of common reason and bound by religious superstition and philosophical enthusiasm (Hume 2006: 123).

In his philosophy of religion, Hume attacks the Stoics not only for their superstition and enthusiasm, but more particularly for their ideas about providence – a point with significant implications. In the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, he addresses the question of liberty and necessity, and his criticism against the Stoics evidently concerns the religious hypothesis in general. Hume’s target is the idea of a whole “ordered with perfect benevolence,” according to which every “physical ill” has its specific place:

From this theory, some philosophers, the ancient *Stoics* among the rest, derived a topic of consolation under all afflictions, while they taught their pupils that those ills under which they laboured were, in reality, goods to the universe; and that to an enlarged view, which could comprehend the whole system of nature, every event became an object of joy and exultation.

(Hume 2000: 76)

This philosophical theory is ineffectual in ordinary practice, and irritates the man “under the racking pains of the gout” rather than consoling him. The conclusion lies at hand that the religious hypothesis as held by many of Hume’s contemporaries, has the same defect. Contrasting Hume’s position with Hutcheson’s aforementioned remarks on providence reveals one of the most striking differences between the two authors’ attitudes to both Christianity and Stoicism. Whereas Hutcheson tried to combine some broadly Christian and broadly Stoic streams of thought, Hume confronts them both. However difficult it may be to reach an adequate interpretation of Hume’s four essays on happiness (*The Epicurean*, *The Stoic*, *The Platonist* and *The Sceptic*, from 1742), the voice of the Skeptic, who objects to the Stoic – who insists that virtue produces happiness – that “no perfect or regular distribution of happiness and misery is ever, in this life, to be expected” (Hume 1987: 178), seems to echo Hume’s own views.<sup>9</sup>

### **Smith and Christian Stoicism: conscience, self-command, and humanity**

Adam Smith (1723–1790), who studied in Glasgow under Hutcheson, and later followed him in the chair of moral philosophy, is another central figure of the Scottish Enlightenment quite commonly classified as “Christian Stoic.” In their *Introduction* to Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, D. D. Raphael and J. Macfie wrote:

Smith’s ethical doctrines are in fact a combination of Stoic and Christian virtues – or, in philosophical terms, a combination of Stoicism and Hutcheson. Hutcheson resolved all virtue into benevolence, a philosophical version of the Christian ethic of love. At an early stage in TMS [*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*], Adam Smith supplements this with Stoic self-command.

(Raphael and Macfie 1976: 6)

That such general claims need further specification is evident from the discussion of Hutcheson, whose very emphasis on benevolence was considered as incompatible with true Christianity by one faction in the Kirk as it contradicts the doctrine of postlapsarian corruption. In Smith’s time, doctrinal orthodoxy was less pressed upon, partly due to the Moderate Party’s

influence in the Kirk. This institutional shift considerably changed the context for philosophers like Smith, encouraged the spreading of new ideas, and connected with a favorable reception of Stoicism, which seems to have offered interesting options especially for moral philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Explicit discussions of Stoic ideas in Smith's moral philosophy exemplify interesting features of their reception in the aftermath of Hutcheson, and commentators have suggested that a variety of central themes in Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759, 6th edn 1790) are rooted in Stoicism, in particular Smith's account of sympathy, his insistence on self-command, his concept of conscience and his treatment of providence and tranquility.<sup>11</sup> Smith's changing views of Christianity should also be kept in mind: Rivers (2000: 260) suggests that "[t]owards the end of his life [Smith] became increasingly critical of Christian doctrine and Christian virtues."

Smith is often interestingly ambiguous in his use of Stoic and Christian concepts. He calls the moral faculty, or conscience, the "great demigod in the breast" (Smith 2002: 291 [*TMS* 6.3.25]). This is reminiscent of the Stoic *hégemonikon*, and of the tradition continued by the Cambridge Platonists, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. However, Smith strongly emphasizes the gradual development through social interaction of the "idea of exact propriety and perfection" upon which the "wise and virtuous man directs his principal attention" in his moral judgments (*ibid.*). Smith's developmental and naturalizing approach distinguishes his conception of conscience from those of many earlier writers, and with questions about his account of providence this has provoked discussions about his relation to both Christian natural theology and Stoicism (Heydt forthcoming).

Smith highlights the importance of self-command in connection with the moral faculty: self-command supports the fixing of the person's attention on the impartial spectator, so that the agent can "identify himself with the ideal man within the breast" (Smith 2002: 171 [*TMS* 3.3.28]). This helps to establish impartial moral judgments and happiness independent of one's misfortunes. Self-command furthermore aims at controlling selfish passions and partial natural feelings, such as anger, pride and vanity (Smith 2002: 282 [*TMS* 6.3.7]; 299ff. [*TMS* 6.3.32ff.]). For Smith, then, "the man of the most perfect virtue [...] is he who joins, to the most perfect command of his own original and selfish feelings, the most exquisite sensibility both to the original and sympathetic feelings of others" (Smith 2002: 176 [*TMS* 3.3.35]) – in other words, Smith's moral ideals combine the allegedly Stoic virtues of self-command and humanity. The connected distinction between two standards for morality – ideal virtue and accessible propriety – and its roots in the Stoic distinction between *honestum* and *decorum* has again provoked numerous discussions among commentators (Waszek 1984; Hanley 2009: 98; Forman-Barzilai 2010: 107–12).

For Smith too, the command of one's feelings should not aim at apathy. Smith criticizes the Stoic philosophy:

By the perfect apathy which it prescribes to us, by endeavouring, not merely to moderate, but to eradicate all our private, partial, and selfish affections, by suffering us to feel for whatever can befall ourselves, our friends, our country, not even the sympathetic and reduced passions of the impartial spectator, it endeavours to render us altogether indifferent and unconcerned in the success or miscarriage of every thing which Nature has prescribed to us as the proper business and occupation of our lives.

(Smith 2002: 345 [*TMS* 7.2.1.46])

In addition to the aspiration to indifference regarding outer events that concern others or ourselves, Smith's rejection of apathy condemns indifference regarding the inner "passions of

the impartial spectator” – the seat of the moral faculty. The boundless cultivation of Stoic principles could lead to moral insensitivity. However, Smith also stipulates that when external events are not in our power, we should submit to divine providence in tranquility, a recommendation that one could interpret as both vaguely Christian and Stoic.

Smith’s tonality regarding self-cultivation differs from Hutcheson’s and the Stoics’ in an interesting point. Hutcheson presented universal benevolence as the perfection of virtue and the proper aim of self-cultivation. Smith, however, strongly warns us not to neglect the inner circles in favor of cultivating the most distant one: to man is allotted “the care of his own happiness, of that of his family, his friends, his country: that he is occupied in contemplating the more sublime, can never be an excuse for his neglecting the more humble department” (Smith 2002: 279 [TMS 7.2.3.6]). Accordingly, commentators have highlighted that Smith rejects Stoic cosmopolitanism (Forman-Barzilai 2010: 124f.; Hanley 2009: 187), and that he insists on the importance of the inner circles for the moral reality of human creatures.<sup>12</sup> This becomes particularly clear in Smith’s discussion of parental love as a justified form of partiality. We rarely blame an excess in parental affection, and the “stoical apathy is, in such cases, never agreeable” (Smith 2002: 164 [TMS 3.3.14]). In the other dimension, Smith’s insisting on not neglecting the self in general, and on the positive aspects of self-love in particular, opposes Hutcheson’s more critical view of self-love.

Smith’s aversion to both Stoic universalism and rigorist conceptions of Christianity becomes apparent when he discusses the need for “some sort of impartiality between ourselves and others,” and the need to “correct the inequalities of our passive feelings” regarding ourselves and others (Smith 2002: 160 [TMS 3.3.7]). He juxtaposes two “severe” philosophical attempts to achieve this, namely that of the “whining and melancholy moralists” (which includes Pascal), and that of the Stoics. The former “have laboured to increase our sensibility to the interests of others” (ibid. [TMS 3.3.9, 8]) by attracting attention solely to the calamities of others – which leads to artificial commiseration and is useless, since we cannot help those who are “out of the sphere of our activity” (ibid. [TMS 3.3.9]). Stoics like Epictetus, by contrast, have attempted to achieve impartiality “by diminishing our sensibility to what peculiarly concerns ourselves” (Smith 2002: 162 [TMS 3.3.11]). Especially when we are directly concerned, self-command is crucial, but “stoical apathy” or extreme insensibility are misplaced regarding oneself and regarding others (Smith 2002: 164 [TMS 3.3.14]; 181 [TMS 3.3.44]).

In Book 7 of *TMS*, Smith discusses different streams of Stoicism: “The independent and spirited, but often harsh Epictetus” mainly taught the “contempt of life and death” and “the most entire submission to the order of Providence,” whereas “the mild, the humane, the benevolent Antonius” taught “the most complete contentment with every event which the current of human affairs could be possibly cast up” (Smith 2002: 339 [TMS 7.2.1.35]). Smith seems more attracted to the second tonality in Stoicism, given his emphasis on humanity, sympathy and public spirit. Yet even if Smith may lean towards the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, the Epictetan theme of submission to providence with the goals of rendering oneself less vulnerable to external circumstances, and of acquiring happiness and natural tranquility, is important for him. The idea of a well-ordered whole underlies Smith’s ethical outlook, and he combines this with an emphasis on the importance of the individual qua part of the whole (Smith 2002: 325 [TMS 7.2.1.19]). Most importantly, Smith sees morality, happiness and providence bound together:

[B]y acting according to the dictates of our moral faculties, we necessarily pursue the most effectual means for promoting the happiness of mankind, and may therefore be



said, in some sense, to co-operate with the Deity, and to advance as far as in our power the plan of Providence.

(Smith 2002: 193 [TMS 3.5.7])

Building on the theme of providence, it has furthermore been argued that Smith's conception of the unintended beneficial effects for the public good of self-interested commercial behavior, or the "invisible hand" in his economic theory, should be understood in terms of a Stoic conception of providence that emphasizes the ultimate harmony of individual interests (Force 2003: 82f., 234f.).

### Concluding remarks

Various other proponents of the Scottish Enlightenment adopted Stoic ideas. William Robertson, historian and principal of Edinburgh University, had a lively interest in Stoicism, and Hugh Blair's *Sermons* (1777) discuss many broadly Stoic themes like self-discipline and the government of the passions, constancy and tranquility. Adam Ferguson famously expressed his admiration for Stoic philosophy in his *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (1792), advertising its active dimension as opposed to retreat. This aspect is highlighted in Dugald Stewart's *Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers of Man* (1829) as well, where the Stoics are also discussed through the lens of the *Dialogue concerning Happiness* (1744) by Shaftesbury's nephew James "Hermes" Harris. Thomas Reid's more critical discussion of Stoic ethics in the *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (1788) as occasionally "beyond the pitch of human nature," because of their rejection of anything that is not in our power, is balanced by his admiration for their system and for "some who sincerely embraced it" (Reid 2010: 162f.).

The general impression that Enlightenment thinkers in Scotland had indeed quite positive views of various Stoic ideas seems well grounded. In the attempt to combine less conservatively orthodox conceptions of religion with a new philosophy, Stoic ideas about providence, parts of their moral psychology, their emphasis on sociability, and their account of virtue as being in some sense in our nature were quite widely embraced and adapted, often accompanied by an emphasis on practical virtue's value over doctrinal orthodoxy. For the debates on innate ideas and reason, the Stoics offered interesting insights. Their views of apathy and of the passions, and the connected moral ontology, however, were quite univocally rejected, and so were their paradoxes, much of their theology, and their favorable attitude to suicide.

Hume was the Enlightenment's exception in being generally more critical of the Stoics – but then again, he was an exception regarding suicide, since he questioned arguments against it. However, there were of course also attacks on the Stoics and their eighteenth-century proponents from another angle: orthodox Calvinists continued to condemn the very combination of Christianity and Stoicism. John Witherspoon's *Ecclesiastical Characteristics* (1753), a grim satirical attack on the members of the Moderate Party and Hume, exemplifies the conservatively orthodox Calvinists' views of the Moderates' leaning towards Stoicism. Witherspoon attacks Hume's expulsion of self-denial and humility from the virtues (Witherspoon 1763: ix), condemns the Moderates' emphasis on moral practice over doctrinal orthodoxy (ibid.: 29f.), and their interest in Shaftesbury and in the heathen philosophers. Marcus Aurelius in particular is mentioned in a sarcastic tone (ibid.: 30f.): "an eminent person, of the moderate character, says, his *Meditations* are the BEST book, that ever was written for forming the heart" (ibid.: 31; see also Rivers 2000: 188f.; Sher 1985: 57–9). Examples like these demonstrate that the answer to the question whether Stoicism and the Christian religion were compatible was far from univocally positive.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Alexander Broadie, Peter Fosl, James Harris, Colin Heydt, Laurent Jaffro, Tom Jones, John Sellars and Jan Swearingen for comments on earlier versions of this chapter. This work was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation, grant number P300P1\_147813.

## Notes

- 1 See e.g. Sher 1985: 175ff.; M. Stewart 1991: 274, 289f., 294; Broadie 2009: 208; 2011: 146f.
- 2 See Brooke 2012, in particular chapters 4 and 6, for European examples.
- 3 See e.g. Adamson 1653; Forbes 1680.
- 4 Interestingly enough, orthodox thinkers in the eighteenth century were often emphasizing not the weakness but the strength of natural reason in combination with inexcusability, in order to counter Hume's skeptical attacks. See Ahnert 2015.
- 5 For a more extensive discussion of Shaftesbury's relation to Stoicism, see e.g. Rivers 2000: 120–32; Brooke 2012: 111–24; Maurer and Jaffro 2013.
- 6 See Moore 2013 on the tensions between Hutcheson and the orthodox Scottish Presbyterians.
- 7 Besides Moore and Silverthorne's Introduction to Hutcheson and Moor 2008, see Moore 2007: 157–9 on the translation of the *Meditations*, and Harris 2008 on the importance of the theme of providence elsewhere in Hutcheson's philosophy.
- 8 See e.g. M. Stewart 1991: 275f.; Moore 2007: 140; Harris 2009: 162; Brooke 2012: 175f.
- 9 For a more extensive discussion, see M. Stewart 1991: 278–83; Harris 2007: 223f.
- 10 For more extensive discussions of these processes, see Sher 1985; Ahnert 2015.
- 11 See Rivers 2000: 260; Forman-Barzilai 2010. However, commentators have suggested interpreting Smith's insistence on the virtue of propriety as an Aristotelian element (see Broadie 2010; Hanley 2009: 176). Haakonssen, in Smith 2002: xxi, interprets Smith as going “beyond the traditional opposition between Stoicism and Epicureanism.” See also Vivenza 2001: 81–3.
- 12 This echoes Butler's Stoic interpretation of the Christian dictum that we should love our neighbors as ourselves in *Sermon* 12 (1726). Due to our limited capacities, we should not cultivate *universal* benevolence, but increase our sympathetic sensibility for “that part of the universe, that part of mankind, that part of our country, which comes under our immediate notice, acquaintance, and influence” (Butler 1970: 111f.).

## Further reading

For a concise introduction to the Scottish Enlightenment, see e.g. A. Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2011). C. Brooke, *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012) is the most recent book providing an excellent discussion of crucial themes in the reception of Stoicism in early modern Europe, with several chapters of relevance for understanding the Scottish Enlightenment (see esp. chapters 5 and 7). I. Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment* (in 2 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 2000) gives a broader context to the debates. J. Moore's and J. Harris' articles on Hutcheson and Hume provide fine insights into the reception of Stoicism by these two authors. G. Vivenza's *Adam Smith and the Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and F. Fonna-Barzilai's *Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) address the issue in Smith in a detailed manner.

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# 19

## KANT AND STOIC ETHICS

*Daniel Doyle and José M. Torralba*

### Introduction

“Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence: [...] *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me*” (*KpV* 5:161).<sup>1</sup> While through the study of nature we become aware of our animal nature, our moral condition raises us above animality and makes us aware of our dignity as persons. This is the famous dictum which summarizes Kant’s philosophical stance. In writing these beautiful words, he was probably inspired by Seneca (*Ep.* 64.5–7; *Constant.* 8.2–4; Santozki 2006: 226–7; Seidler 1981: 674–6). Kant held ancient moral philosophy in great esteem (*Religion* 6:24).

Kant was well acquainted with the Stoic tradition, particularly through his reading of Cicero and Seneca. He studied them both during his school years at the Collegium Fridericianum and also later as a university professor. However, in his published writings he does not usually refer to specific texts nor does he mention authors by name. As a consequence, in his discussion of Stoic theories it is common to find both textual and systematic inaccuracies (Santozki 2006: 154–8; Seidler 1981: 1–13). Kant seems more interested in using Stoic ideas to develop and define his own position (Schneewind 1996: 292–3).

Both Kant and the Stoics ultimately understood philosophical activity as a guide for living. However, contrary to the Stoic intellectualistic bent, Kant strongly denies that philosophical knowledge provides any help for leading a moral life. The role of philosophy is to provide justifications for the moral principles available at any particular time to ordinary people. The philosopher or the sage is in no better a position to lead a moral life (*GMS* 4:404).

In this chapter our main objective is to offer a number of Stoic interpretative keys so that we can better understand Kant’s moral philosophy. That Kant was strongly influenced (positively or negatively) by the Stoics is beyond doubt. Unfortunately, only on a few occasions is it possible to trace direct textual links. However, one can identify a number of structural parallels between Stoic and Kantian positions. We provide an account of some of the most relevant of these because central concepts of Kantian ethics – such as the good will, virtue, the relationship between duty and happiness, and the role of emotions – gain a more precise definition when considered from a Stoic perspective. Textual references to Stoicism serve this purpose but will not be discussed in detail here.

We have chosen the tension between duty and happiness as a guiding thread. As is evident from his pre-critical writings, Kant framed his position in dialogue with the Epicurean, Stoic and Christian traditions. Kant uses the Stoic notion of virtue to develop his understanding of duty as the source of moral value. Having a good will is always in our power and, thus, is the only thing required by morality. However, since human beings are finite and have a sensible nature, Kant finds the Stoic understanding of happiness unsatisfactory. Even though happiness, according to Kant, should always be subordinated to duty, it is an inevitable component of our willing and, thus, of human fulfillment. Moreover, and contrary to a widely accepted reading, Kantian ethics does not regard happiness as incompatible with morality. Rather, when it accords with duty, it is incorporated into the sphere of the morally valuable.

In the next section, “What Is Good?,” we examine the Stoic features of Kant’s notion of goodness and explain why the will, and not its results, is the *locus* of value. “Nature, Reason, and Normativity” (pp. 273–5), considers the source of normativity and how Kant retains the Stoic notion of virtue, while rejecting its natural basis. Virtue and moral progress is the topic of “Moral Development” (pp. 275–7). In this regard apathy and habit are discussed. The fifth section (“The Highest Good,” pp. 277–9) is devoted to Kant’s notion of the highest good and his critique of the Stoics for their superhuman representation of the sage and for down-playing the role of happiness in human willing. The sixth, “Cicero, Garve, and Kant on Perfect and Imperfect Duties” (pp. 279–80), traces the double influence (Stoic and modern, intensional and extensional) in the development of Kant’s system of duties.

### What is good? The internal determination the will as the source of value

At the beginning of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant famously claimed that there is nothing “good without limitation except a good will” (GMS 4:393). All other supposed goods, such as talents of mind, qualities of character, gifts of fortune, and even happiness have, by contrast, only a *conditioned* worth. In a certain sense like the Stoics, Kant restricts the proper application of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ to the will. A will is good not because of “what it effects or accomplishes,” but “only because of its willing [*Wollen*]” (GMS 4:394, translation modified). At the same time, “this will need not [...] be the sole and complete good, but it must still be the highest good and the condition of every other, even of all demands for happiness” (GMS 4:397).

In the fifth section, “The Highest Good,” we will discuss the relationship between goodness and happiness. The present section considers the Stoic features of Kant’s notion of goodness. In a key passage of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, devoted to the good as the object of pure practical reason, Kant agrees with the Stoic Posidonius (Cicero, *Tusc.* 2.61), who “in the most intense pains of gout cried out: Pain, however you torment me I will still never admit that you are something evil (*kakon, malum*)!” (KpV 5:60). Since pain did not “diminish the worth of his person, but only of the worth of his condition” (KpV 5:60), it should not be called evil (*Böses*), but only ill-being (*Übel*).

Kant distinguishes two senses of good and bad: whereas well-being and ill-being (*Wohl/Übel*) refer to the person’s state of feeling (in terms of gratification or pain), good and evil (*Gut/Böses*) refer to a will determined by the moral law. Properly speaking, the source of goodness is morality, in the sense of the effective determination of the will through the moral law. Thus, moral good and evil are found in the “way of acting, the maxim of the will, and consequently the acting person himself, but not [in] a thing” (KpV 5:60).

An explanation of why the will and not its results is the *locus* of value is needed. For Kant, actual human action always entails the determination of a *particular* will. When that

determination is morally right, the subject must have taken the objective principle (i.e. the moral law) as his *own* principle, that is, as his maxim (*KpV* 5:19–21). A key point in Kant's understanding of action is the distinction between maxim and action. This distinction parallels two kinds of acts the faculty of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*) is capable of: will (*Wille*) and choice (*Willkür*). The maxim is the principle that determines the causality of the faculty of desire to *produce* the action; the action (*Handlung*), properly speaking, is the result (*Erfolg*) of that determination. The will is able to determine the choice to adopt (or reject) a maxim and, thus, to produce (or prevent) the action. However, the achievement of the result is not granted by and is, up to a point, independent of the agent. What lies within the power of the agent is the determination to act, in other words, the *inner* determination of the choice (*MS* 6:213; *KpV* 5:15).

In turn, such determination depends on a peculiar kind of subjective practical principle that Kant calls “maxim of the will” or “inner attitude” (*Gesinnung*). Inner attitude is an underlying practical principle the agent has freely incorporated at a particular moment in her life, which is then actualized in each particular maxim she adopts. Inner attitude is either good or evil, depending on whether it takes respect for the moral law or egoism as the ultimate principle (*Religion* 6:22–5; Allison 1990: 136ff.). Technically, by “good will” Kant refers to a faculty of desire which has taken respect for moral law as its internal principle of determination. Moral value is located in the inner attitude and, thus, in the person and not in nature.

Not surprisingly, a similar picture can be found in the Stoics. They understand action as the result of a complex psychological process, within the ruling part of the soul (*hégemonikon*). Every action depends on a practical impulse (*praktikê hormê*) (Stob. 2.86,17–87,6 WH = *SVF* 3.169; 2.88,1–6 WH = *SVF* 3.171), which is mediated by an evaluative-critical moment, i.e. the event of assent (*sunkatathesis*) (Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1057a = *SVF* 3.177; Cicero, *Acad.* 2.24–5). Assent is representative of the agent's dispositional condition. The event of assent is a verification that operates within a descriptive dimension and it means that the agent judges, according to her epistemic disposition (i.e. her set of desires and beliefs), that something is to be done.

In our opinion, the internal determination of the faculty of desire in Kant plays a similar structural role to assent in the Stoic theory. The reason is that the moral value (*axia*) does not rest upon what is being done, but upon the agent's dispositional condition (*diathesis*). This disposition is expressed through the mental event of assent, which, in the case of the sage, is infallible, permanent and unchanging (Seneca, *Ep.* 95.57–8; Cicero, *Acad.* 1.41 = *SVF* 1.60). Since goodness must lie within the power of the agent, it can *only* be located in a good will (Kant) or in a virtuous disposition (Stoicism).

What is not in our hands is morally indifferent. Thus, the *result* of the determination (i.e. the action) can neither add anything to its moral value nor take anything away from it. As Seneca puts it: “All that makes you a good man lies within yourself. And what do you need in order to become good? To will [*velle*] it” (*Ep.* 80.4). In another letter, he adds: “The good [*bonum*] is not in the thing [*re*] selected, but in the quality [*quali*] of the selection. Our actions are honorable [*honestum*] but not the actual things which we do” (Seneca, *Ep.* 92.12). This Stoic doctrine sheds light on the distinct Kantian position at the beginning of the *Groundwork*. Moreover, these words from Seneca reverberate in the passage from the *Critique of Practical Reason* quoted above: not a “thing” but the “way of acting” is what is called good (or evil).<sup>2</sup>

According to this conception of human volition, good and evil are defined as modes of acting. At this point, another question needs to be addressed: what is the difference between

acting rightly or wrongly? In other words, what is the source of normativity and where does moral value come from?

### Nature, reason, and normativity

It is well known that, in Stoicism, the concept of right reason (*orthos logos*) depicts the moral law of the universe which has its base in nature. As Long has forcefully argued, the Stoics treat nature as both a normative and a factual principle, in as much as “life according to reason is entailed by life according to Nature; but life according to Nature is not obligatory because it accords with reason” (Long 1970–1: 150). In this sense, Stoic theory is strongly naturalistic. By naturalism, here we are referring to two distinct though related points. First, it is becoming aware that what is required by right reason is precisely what is determined by nature. Descriptions of “natural phenomena” are descriptions of what is the case and what ought to be the case. Second, it is becoming aware that acting morally right consists in perfecting oneself through the development of one’s own faculties (and one’s own nature).

Naturalism in the former sense is the basic type. It assumes that ethics are grounded in cosmology and “not in human psychology” (Striker 1991: 231; see also Long 1970–1). As Cicero wrote, “one cannot make correct judgements about good and evil unless one understands the whole system of nature, and even of the life of the gods, as well as the question of whether or not human nature is in harmony with that of the universe” (Cicero, *Fin.* 3.73). The source of normativity is the harmony, order and rationality that we find in the universe. Rational agents regard themselves as part of a whole and take what happens to them as mere particular events in the life of the whole (Diog. Laert. 7.88–9).

The second sense, as becomes evident in the process of *oikeiōsis*, accounts for the moral development of the individual. As we grow and become more rational, we desist from acting on natural instincts and gradually go on to act in accordance with certain rules (“appropriate actions”). Once these actions become rationally consistent, virtue is developed. Virtuous human beings desire perfective development in their practical life and reject what is contrary to this. So the command to *live in agreement with nature* becomes for the mature human being equivalent to *living in agreement with reason* (Diog. Laert. 7.86). Nature is a benevolent agent and, thus, we do not only live perforce by reason rather than by instinct, but also regard this kind of life as *good* for us and indeed the *sole* good. Becoming virtuous is a *natural process* of coming to think of ourselves as rational beings and to grasp facts regarding rationality and moral value (*homologia*). From this perspective, the source of normativity might be located in the achievement of virtue (Cicero, *Fin.* 3.20–1).

Taking into consideration the two ways in which goodness is defined in naturalistic terms, it is clear that in Stoicism there is no leap to be made between nature and normativity. As is well known, this is at odds with Kant’s position. Before we examine it, it will be of interest to briefly consider a prominent interpretation of the Stoic position with respect to the moral point of view.

Annas has suggested that no appeal to cosmic nature is necessary to ground a full account of moral agency (Annas 1993, 2007). In this sense, her reading of Stoicism would not be tied to the first kind of naturalism. Up to a point, like Striker and other “cosmic-naturalistic” advocates, she believes that the process of *oikeiōsis* amounts to a gradual acknowledgement of what rational consistency *presupposes*. However, Annas disagrees with them as to what this rational consistency *entails*. It does not merely entail being right with regard to the *content* of “rational consistency” but also *knowing* it in the right way. For Annas, it is only from the moral point of view that such “rational consistency” becomes normative and a source of moral agency.



In saying this, Annas is interpreting Stoicism from a Kantian perspective. Rational consistency is not “just the consistency of reasons for getting what we happen to want, but the consistency of reasons that are reasons that a rational person would have and act on” (Annas 1993: 169). Thus, acting virtuously consists of “acting on a certain kind of reason, rather than achieving the results of so acting” (ibid.). This would mean that, after all, moral goodness emerges from an ethical realm, since moral reasons result from *our* rational nature and not (at least directly) from cosmic nature.

Interesting as it is, we do not find Annas’s reading fully convincing. Due to the systematic Stoic conception of philosophy, and in agreement with the majority of scholars, we favor the cosmic viewpoint (Long 1970–1; Striker 1991; Inwood 1985: 212–15; Cooper 1999; Boeri 2009; Doyle 2014: ch. 3). Irrespective of the accuracy of Annas’s reading, we find relevant, for our purposes, her claim that “merely accepting some principle, however excellent its content, does not amount to being moral; we have mere heteronomy until the agent independently endorses the principle through the appropriate kind of reasoning on his part” (Annas 1993: 161). As we shall consider later on, Kant’s notion of virtue as acting from duty (*aus Pflicht*) precisely captures the need to morally endorse a principle of action through the appropriate kind of reason, that is, in an autonomous way. Even though our aim is to consider the influence of Stoic ethics on Kant, this discussion of Annas has given us the opportunity to see that a Kantian perspective also opens up fruitful readings of the Stoics.

Kant retains the Stoic notion of virtue, while rejecting its natural basis (Santozki 2006: 180). He strongly denied that morality could be based upon nature or anthropology (*MS* 6:216–7). The realm of nature (to which human nature belongs) and the realm of freedom (or morality) have different and heterogeneous forms of legislation. Even though Kant praises the Stoic notion of virtue as the supreme principle of morality, he rejects the two kinds of naturalism mentioned. The Stoics offer a genetic explanation of how the moral point of view is achieved, whereas Kant gives a rational justification of it in formal terms (by means of the categorical imperative).

When discussing the different principles of morality, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant places the Stoics and Wolff together, labeling their principle as “perfection” (*Vollkommenheit*) (*KpV* 5:40). It is not completely clear why he did so (Seidler 1981: 126). He might have been influenced by Garve’s translation of *virtus* as “internal perfection” (*innere Vollkommenheit*) (Santozki 2006: 173). By perfection, Kant means talent and skill to achieve an end. Probably influenced by Baumgarten, he understands that following the Stoic principle *naturae convenienter vivere* leads to one’s perfection (Baumgarten 1760: 21). For the rationalists, what leads to perfection is the optimal thing to be done. This could be the reason why Kant places Wolff and the Stoics together. For Kant, living in agreement with nature is not a valid moral principle, because it is heteronomous: here reason plays only an instrumental role, since the end of actions is already given. As he claimed in his university lectures, it is not a principle of morality but of prudence, and not even a good one, since it is unclear whether it is really good to do what accords with nature (Kant 2004: 51–2 [page-numbering of Kaehler’s manuscript]).

Despite the structural parallelism regarding the moral point of view that can be traced between both philosophies, they diverge when it comes to *oikeiôsis* as the grounding of morality. Even though Kant never explicitly referred to this Stoic doctrine, the following words might be interpreted as a direct critique of it: “In a being that has reason and a will, if the proper end of nature were its *preservation*, its *welfare*, in a word its *happiness*, then nature would have hit upon a very bad arrangement in selecting the reason of the creature to carry out this purpose” (*GMS* 4:395; Himmelmann 2003: 129–30). Since instinct would have been

a more appropriate means for that end, Kant considers that we have reason for something other than achieving happiness.

The problem with this interpretation is that it reduces the Stoic notion of reason to a purely instrumental one (as a slave of human nature). The Stoics would have claimed that human rationality also plays a constitutive role in the achievement of our end: to live in agreement with nature is equivalent to living in agreement with reason. For Kant, the specific function of reason in morality is to grasp the heterogeneous nature of duty and happiness and establish the proper order between them. This idea is developed by Kant in his account of virtue.

### **Moral development: virtue, apathy, and inner attitude in struggle**

In Kant's treatment of virtue two different perspectives can be identified: *objective* (from the grounding of morality) and *subjective* (from moral psychology) (*MS* 6:409). The *objective* perspective appears mainly in his discussion of the highest good, where virtue is one of the necessary components of the object of the faculty of desire. To be virtuous means having a good will (adopting the moral law as the principle of action). The *subjective* perspective is to be found mainly in Kant's description of virtue as inner attitude in struggle, where being virtuous amounts to acquiring the necessary strength to control the natural impulses that are opposed to the moral law. In the next section, devoted to the highest good, the first perspective will be addressed. In this section we will explore virtue from the second perspective.

In the beginning of the second part of *Religion*, Kant praises the Stoic conception of virtue. Virtue "designates courage and valour [...] and, hence, presupposes the presence of an enemy" (*Religion* 6:57). Seneca's maxim *vivere militare est* (*Ep.* 96.5) resounds here. However, Kant criticizes the Stoics for taking the natural inclinations as the enemy, instead of acknowledging that evil lies in our own will. It is "the *malice* (of the human heart) which secretly undermines the inner attitude with soul-corrupting principles" (*Religion* 6:57, translation modified).

Inner attitude is the structural locus where the moral law becomes an incentive for the determination of the faculty of desire (properly speaking, of the choice). Inner attitude is a kind of maxim, which configures the willing of the agent. There are only two possible kinds of inner attitude: either good or evil. The adoption of one inner attitude or the other depends on a radical act of choice and is, thus, imputable to the agent (*Religion* 6:19–32).

In *The Metaphysics of Morals* virtue and inner attitude (*Gesinnung*) are linked in the following way: "The capacity and considered resolve to withstand a strong but unjust opponent with *fortitude* (*fortitudo*) and, with respect to what opposes the inner attitude *within us*, [is] *virtue* (*virtus, fortitudo moralis*)" (*MS* 6:380, translation modified). Being good amounts to having a virtuous inner attitude, i.e. a "subjective determining ground to fulfill one's duty" (*MS* 6:410). However, Kant is careful not to define virtue as the "possession of a complete *purity* of inner attitudes," but as an "inner attitude *in struggle*" (*KpV* 5:84, translation modified). The moral level that corresponds to human beings is progress towards virtue and not its full possession (sanctity). Since virtue, considered objectively, is an "ideal and unattainable," morality commands "constant approximation to it." From the perspective of the subject of virtue (ourselves), we are always starting "from the beginning" because we are affected by our inclinations (*MS* 6:409).

Kant deems the Stoic notion of virtue to be in real danger of leading into "moral enthusiasm" (*KpV* 5:84). The problem is that the Stoic ideal of the sage raises "himself above the animal nature of the human being" and "is not subject to any temptation to transgress the moral

law” (*KpV* 5:127). The sage carries out actions “not from duty but as bare merit” (*KpV* 5:85). Such actions, for Kant, lack moral value. In his understanding, virtue (as strength) is what allows us to overcome the incentives of our inclinations and, thus, to carry out actions *from duty*, which is precisely what gives them moral value.

Kant never defines virtue as a habit (*habitus*) (*MS* 6:383–4). Habit “deprives even good actions of their moral worth because it impairs the freedom of the mind and, moreover, leads to thoughtless repetition of the very same act (*monotony*), and so becomes ridiculous” (*Anthropology* 7:149). In accordance with the will/choice distinction within the faculty of desire, Kant considers this sense of habit as a property (*Beschaffenheit*) of choice (*Willkür*). However, he admits that virtue might be defined as a “habit” in a very specific sense, namely as a property of the will (*Wille*) (*MS* 6:407). In this regard, he seems to be conceiving the notion of inner attitude as a constant disposition of the will because its principle (respect for the law) is adopted once and for all and configures any subsequent particular maxim and action.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, the following paradox results: even though virtue is *always starting* (in its struggle with the inclinations), its principle is *firmly* established. Kant might have been influenced by the Stoics in this firmness of virtue (Seneca, *Ep.* 72.6; Diog. Laert. 7.127; Kant 1902–9:486–7; Seidler 1981: 164), but clearly not in the idea of virtue as an indefinite progression. In addition, for the Stoics, “practice, over a long time, turns into nature” (Stob. 2.107,20 WH = *SVF* 3.366) and, so, acting out of habit would not exclude moral value for them.

As a natural being, the Stoic sage is inevitably subject to natural events, but when a great disaster has occurred he may still be happy because of his firm and rational disposition. He is internally unperturbed and therefore acts virtuously because it is the right thing to do, without having to summon extra emotional feelings to motivate action. This is the basis for Stoic *apatheia*. For a sage, passions (*pathê*) must be extirpated because, as Sherman expressively maintains, “living emotionally could rob one of *eudaimonia*” (Sherman 1997: 118).

Virtue as the unique constitutive element of happiness underpins the thesis that neither pains nor pleasures are morally good per se. The sage is happy, even in an unfavorable context, because he enjoys a sort of moral contentment with himself. Virtue is an activity carried out and achieved in the invulnerable citadel of the mind. In this sense, Seneca declares that “fortune can snatch away only what She herself has given, but virtue she does not give; therefore, she cannot take it away” (*Constant.* 5.4). In contrast, the foolish person has an inconstant and passionate disposition because he is attached to the external things he pursues. He spends his life pursuing and avoiding morally indifferent things with the false belief that they are good or bad. Passions (*pathê*) are precisely these false beliefs (*SVF* 3.377–420). They are disruptions of the proper pneumatic tension (which reflects the normal state of our soul) (Diog. Laert. 7.158; Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.11). The Stoic doctrine of apathy affords a true and reasoned belief about what is of value in the world in order to produce a state of emotional health. Clearly, the cure for passions has less to do with removing all feelings from human life than with the emphasis on living rationally and the doctrine of *adiaphora* (Seidler 1981: 439). So, even though the sage does not experience pity, he will be merciful and helpful to those in need. Seneca’s distinction between *miser cordia* and *clementia* explains that the sage will do everything in his power to help his friends (and others), without joining in their suffering by lamenting, because it only makes things worse (*Clem.* 2.6.1–2).<sup>4</sup> Apathy, then, as a special sort of inner calm, is not opposed to a deep involvement in the external world (Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.56). The aim of “emotional therapy” is not to expunge one’s emotional experiences, but rather to develop good feelings built upon consistent reasons (*eupatheia*).

Kant appeals directly to Stoic apathy as a principle of order in the emotional life. In saying that there is a duty to “actively sympathize” with the fate of others (*MS* 6:457), he is not

trying to restore the Stoic revision of the content of *eudaimonia*, but most likely attempting to fight against the sentimentalist philosophical atmosphere of his time.<sup>5</sup> Apathy is for Kant a moral principle to be followed and not a *natural* disposition some individuals have of not getting overly excited. In other words, apathy is a *duty* (MS 6:408), not a gift of nature. Otherwise, sagehood and virtue would be all too easy and automatic for even those who are not naturally phlegmatic (*Anthropology* 7:254; *KU* 5:272). In saying that we have a duty to foster apathy because emotions should never control our lives to the exclusion of free determination to act, Kant is taking a Stoic path (*KU* 5:227; Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.31, 65).

He also seems to follow the Stoic lead in distinguishing *passions* (*Leidenschaften*) and *affects* (*Affekte*) as two different kinds of emotional disorder (Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.30; Seneca, *Ep.* 75.11–12). In particular, it seems quite clear that Seneca's *morbus* and *adfectus* distinction in *De ira* corresponds to Kant's *Leidenschaften* and *Affekte*. For Kant, affects (such as anger) show a lack of virtue because they only interfere with the right use of reason, whereas passions (such as hatred) are vices because they are lasting inclinations that corrupt the principle of action (MS 6:408; *Anthropology* 7:251–3; Seidler 1981: 416–17).

What distinguishes Kant is his consideration of apathy not as the final stage of a natural process (as in Stoicism), but a starting point of moral life. Indeed, at the end of the *Doctrine of Virtue*, where Kant refers to moral didactics and ascetics, he remarkably declares that we must go beyond apathy: "What is not done with pleasure but merely as compulsory service has no inner worth for one who attends to his duty in this way" (MS 6:484). Such pleasure is described by Kant as "cheerfulness" arising from the "conscience of having restored freedom" by means of the exercise of virtue (MS 6:484). In this regard, it has been rightly argued that affects are positive auxiliary forces in the moral life and "crucial" to the Kantian *Doctrine of Virtue* (Sherman 1997: 135).<sup>6</sup>

### **The highest good: virtue and happiness as the complete object of the faculty of desire**

For the Stoics the only good is virtue (*aretē*), the only evil is vice, and the rest consists entirely of indifferent objects (*adiaphora*): they do not contribute to happiness and may be used well or badly, since per se they neither benefit nor harm us (Diog. Laert. 7.102–3). Only virtue is the proper *telos* of man (Cicero, *Fin.* 3.22; 3.31).<sup>7</sup> The actual procurement of the things pursued (*skopos*) rightly or wisely is irrelevant, since true goodness lies not in the objects of our pursuit, but in the pursuit itself. That the Stoic sage is also inclined towards natural things is not explained by the fact that he regards them as good, but because he realizes that they are the rational things to pursue (Frede 1986: 109–10).

According to Kant, happiness does not have moral value. On the contrary, it might be opposed to morality and become an obstacle for virtue. Only acting from duty is a source of moral value. At the same time, every determination to act is a determination to bring about an object or a state of affairs in the world. Even though moral imperatives cannot have an object (or matter) as their ground, the determination of the will does not take place in a vacuum. It is undeniable that "every willing [*Wollen*] must also have an object and hence a matter" (*KpV* 5:34, translation modified). Such content of action is provided by the principle of happiness, i.e. it arises from our needs and natural inclinations. For Kant, both happiness and duty are necessary constituents of human life. However, they are heterogeneous and, thus, their articulation is problematic. It is in the discussion of the highest good that an adequate articulation can be found.

In the second, and arguably central, chapter of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant defines the "good" as the object of (pure) practical reason (*KpV* 5:57–8). When later on, in the

Dialectic, he discusses the “highest good,” he refers to it as the *totality* of the object of practical reason (*KpV* 5:108). We might ask, what is being added to the first definition of the good? And the answer is: happiness. The highest good is the whole and complete good because it is the necessary object of the act of willing of finite beings. Virtue and happiness are the constituents of this volition. The relationship between them is the main point Kant addresses with regard to the highest good. For the Stoics it is an analytic one. In contrast, Kant denies such a claim because of the heterogeneity of the elements. They belong to different realms (*Gebiete*) and, thus, there cannot be a *necessary* link between the determination of the will (the inner attitude) and its effects in the world (*KpV* 5:113). The relationship can only be synthetic and their connection causal: virtue is the condition of happiness because it makes us worthy of it (*KpV* 5:110; Gallois 2008).<sup>8</sup>

Kant follows the Stoics in taking virtue as the supreme moral principle, but he strongly criticizes them, firstly, for their superhuman representation of the sage and, secondly, for downplaying the role of happiness in human volition. Regarding the first critique, the problem is that the Stoic sage, in claiming that virtue, as moral perfection, can be fully achieved in this life, exceeds the limits of human nature (*KpV* 5:127). Seneca even claimed that the sage has an advantage over the gods, since he is virtuous by merit (*Ep.* 3.14; 52.6; 53.11–12; *Prov.* 6.6). For Kant, as has been explained, it is only possible to conceive an endless progress towards moral perfection. Interestingly enough, such progress is “the *real* object of our will” (*KpV* 5:122, emphasis added). In contrast with the idealism of the Stoic sage, Kant’s approach offers a more *realist* conception of morality, consistent with our finite nature. We have an intermediate status: between our inclinations (happiness) and duty (moral law). Since inclinations “do not of themselves accord with the moral law, which has quite different sources” (*KpV* 5:84), human beings are located at an intersection (Seidler 1981: 145).

With regard to the second critique, Kant claims that the Stoics “would not let the second *component* of the highest good, namely happiness, hold [a place] as a special object of the faculty of desire” (*KpV* 5:127). Certainly, for the Stoics, happiness is the end of human life. The problem, however, lies in their notion of happiness. According to Kant, they had placed happiness “solely in acting and in contentment with one’s personal worth, thereby including it in the consciousness of one’s moral cast of mind [*Denkungsart*]” (*KpV* 5:127; *R* 6880, 19:190). Properly speaking, happiness consists in “a rational being’s consciousness of the agreeableness of life uninterruptedly accompanying his whole existence” (*KpV* 5:22). It is in this context that Kant distinguishes between aesthetic and intellectual contentment (*Zufriedenheit*) (*KpV* 5:117–18; Himmelmann 2003: 135). The former is happiness (*Glückseligkeit*) in the strict sense, while the latter is an “analogue of happiness” that accompanies “consciousness of virtue” (*KpV* 5:117) because “the inner attitude is necessarily connected with consciousness of the determination of the will *directly by the law*” (*KpV* 5:116). Such determination is accompanied by satisfaction.

From this perspective, it can be argued that Kant criticizes the Stoics for downplaying aesthetic contentment and limiting happiness to intellectual contentment. He emphatically asserts that the Stoics located happiness *only* in “acting” (*Handeln*) and contentment with “one’s personal worth” (*KpV* 5:127). Similarly, he claimed that happiness is the “consciousness [*bewußt*] of this possession [of virtue] as belonging to the state of the subject” (*KpV* 5:112).

Certainly, Kant and the Stoics profoundly disagree on this point. However, to be entirely fair, it is necessary to say that the Stoic notion of happiness is not accurately captured by Kant. Intellectual contentment arises from the *consciousness* of having acted in accordance with duty, while Stoic happiness does not consist in the consciousness of the possession of virtue,

but in the *possession* itself (i.e. in a kind of corporeal disposition) (Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 440e–441d). It is in virtue that happiness exists (i.e. virtue is sufficient in itself for happiness).

Notwithstanding such imprecision, the Kantian approach helps distinguish contentment corresponding to virtue from contentment corresponding to happiness. In our opinion, Kant is right in saying that the Stoics did not take this distinction sufficiently into account. That is why they were justified to claim that the sage is necessarily happy which, in the Kantian sense of happiness, is plainly false. Had they paid more careful attention to the *real* condition of human beings, they would have become aware of their mistake.<sup>9</sup>

Kant's critique of the Stoic conception of the highest good allows us to better understand the way Kant relates duty to happiness. Despite profound differences, a structural parallelism can also be found here. According to Kant, the highest good (in which virtue is the supreme good and condition of happiness) constitutes the *complete* object of the faculty of desire. As Kant declares, "the production of the highest good in the world is the necessary object of a will, determinable by the moral law" (*KpV* 5:122). That the highest good *must* be the object of volition does not, by itself, explain how there *can* be a correspondence between duty and happiness. The problem lies in the relationship of the conditioned to its condition, since such a relationship belongs to what Kant calls the supersensible realm, whereas actions (by means of which the highest good would be produced) belong to the sensible one.

As a solution, Kant postulates the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. Virtue as the "complete conformity of inner attitudes with the moral law" is holiness (*KpV* 5:122). Since no human being is capable of it in this world, the postulate of immortality is required by reason. In turn, the postulate of the existence of God is necessary because only God can command that there is a "supreme cause of nature having a causality in keeping with the moral disposition" and an "exact correspondence of happiness with morality" (*KpV* 5:125).

Human willing *necessarily* includes duty and happiness, as both our intermediate condition and the structure of our faculty of desire show. For Kant, morality does not demand that happiness be eliminated, but it must always be subordinate to duty. Given the heterogeneous nature of both elements, it will never be possible to achieve a complete integration of the two (*KpV* 5:111). Since the highest good is the necessary object of our willing, not only is happiness never morally evil, but its pursuit is required by reason (*KpV* 5:61).

At this point, an answer to the question formulated at the beginning of this chapter makes itself available to us. As has already been explained, happiness, as such, is morally indifferent (although it frequently becomes an obstacle for morality). Even though, for Kant, virtue is certainly the only source of value, the fact remains that happiness might be incorporated into the sphere of the morally valuable. The distinction "according to duty" (*pflichtwidrig*)/"from duty" (*aus Pflicht*) explains this. Moral value results from the fulfillment of duties (for the sake of duty) and from those actions that are not contrary to duty (i.e. permitted), provided that they are carried out by an agent with a virtuous inner attitude. The Stoic tenet that moral value does not depend so much on *what*, but on *how* something is done becomes crucial in this regard. So it seems the Stoics provide us with conceptual tools for understanding the moral value of happiness (in Kant). Further evidence for this claim can be found in the way Kant articulates the system of duties in *The Metaphysics of Morals*.

### Cicero, Garve, and Kant on perfect and imperfect duties

In *De officiis* Cicero rendered the Stoic distinction *kathêkon*/*katorthôma* as intermediate duty (*officium medium*) and absolute duty (*officium absolutum*) (*Off.* 1.8). Absolute duty can only be performed by the sage, whereas intermediate duties are shared by all (*Off.* 3.14). The sage

and the fool might carry out the same action but only what the sage does counts as morally good. As Cicero explains in *De finibus*, for example, to the duty (*officium*) of restoring a trust, the “qualification ‘as a matter of justice’ [*iuste*]” can be added, when it is done by the sage (*Fin.* 3.59 = *SVF* 3.498). Kant was clearly influenced by this Ciceronian doctrine. Fortunately, in this case, the textual link can be traced.<sup>10</sup>

At the time of writing the *Groundwork* we know that Kant had read Garve’s translation and commentary of Cicero’s *De officiis* (Reich 1939). For Garve, *officia perfecta* and *imperfecta* are not “two different kinds of duty, but only different ways of considering one and the same duty” (Garve 1787: 20).<sup>11</sup> The difference is not to be found in the “external events or in their consequences, but in the way of thinking [*Denkungsart*], in the mind’s inner attitudes [*Gesinnungen*], from which they [the actions] arise. And this way of thinking, this inner attitude, remains even when, due to a defect in the cause [*Anlass*], no action is present” (Garve 1787: 29). For instance, saving someone who is drowning does not have moral value in itself, except when it is done out of philanthropy (*Menschenliebe*) (Garve 1787: 20).

The roots of Kant’s crucial distinction between acting “according to duty”/“from duty” can easily be recognized here. There is a difference between perfunctorily saving someone’s life and doing it for philanthropic reasons or, in Kantian terms, from respect for the moral law (Schulz 1986: 290–91). What we consider to be of Stoic origin in this doctrine is the *intensional* character of the distinction.<sup>12</sup> Every duty can be motivated by two different incentives (*Triebfeder*): self-love (happiness) or respect for the moral law. Therefore, the same dutiful action (in terms of content) can be carried out in two different ways (in terms of its moral value). Thus, moral goodness does not lie so much in *what*, but in *how* it is done.

Cicero’s classification of duties as perfect/imperfect is maintained in the tradition, but with significant changes. Modern natural theorists use the same terminology to separate right from morality, but they apply the distinction *extensionally*. Perfect duties are juridical, external and enforceable, whereas imperfect duties are ethical, internal and unenforceable. This change means that juridical and ethical duties correspond to different actions and not only to different ways of performing the same action.

Interestingly, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant follows the taxonomy of modern natural law (extensional), but mapping onto it the original Ciceronian (intensional) meaning (Torralba 2012: 320–31). Kant maintains the extensional distinction right/ethics through his division between juridical duties (*Rechtspflichten*) and duties of virtue (*Tugendpflichten*). In turn, duties of virtue, depending on their level of specification, can be perfect or imperfect (*MS* 6:379, 389–90).<sup>13</sup>

In order to understand how Kant recovers this intensional character in his classification of duties, consider the following two possibilities. First, the possibility that juridical duties may *also* be fulfilled from duty (*MS* 6:220–1). Second, the possibility that duties of virtue may not be motivated by the moral law (*MS* 6:446). In such cases, the action is performed according to duty, but lacks moral value. Therefore, the *same* dutiful action (juridical or ethical) can be performed in two different *ways*. The good will, the inner attitude of the agent, is the only source of moral value.

## Conclusion

A number of structural parallelisms between Kant and Stoic ethics have been drawn and, where possible, textual evidence has been provided. In both approaches, virtue is the apex of morality and always within our power. Therefore, being moral is not a chimera, but a real possibility. However, in the philosophical tradition, such a possibility has frequently been spurned as other-worldly or as Stoic, in a pejorative sense. The way Kant appropriates

Stoicism, it has been argued, demonstrates that purity of virtue is attainable for intermediate beings like us and that the enemy of morality is not our natural inclinations (including emotions and desire for happiness), but lack of rational control over them. Virtue requires us not to suppress, but to subordinate them. Subordination establishes a kind of order. The principle of such order lies within the agent, in our person. In the capacity to establish that order we discover our freedom and dignity. In Stoicism Kant found an outstanding catalyst to channel his powerful intuitions.

Unfortunately, despite Kant's huge intellectual efforts to locate moral value within the agent (as a shining jewel), very soon in the philosophical tradition it was this idea that became the main target of criticism. Hegel's fierce critique of morality (*Moralität*) precisely because of its internal character and disregard for ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) has been reiterated ever since.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Alejandro Vigo and participants in his research seminar at the Institute for Culture and Society (Instituto Cultura y Sociedad) for their comments and helpful discussion. We also thank Mark Sefton for the language revision. Research on this topic was supported by the Spanish Government (Ref. FFI2012–38737–C03–01).

### Notes

- 1 Quotation from Kant's works follows the standard format: the Berlin Academy volume and page number (Kant 1902–). English translations are taken from the Cambridge edition (Kant 1992–). The following abbreviations have been adopted: *GMS*, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*; *KpV*, *Critique of Practical Reason*; *KU*, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*; *Religion*, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*; *MS*, *The Metaphysics of Morals*; *Anthropology*, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*; *R*, *Notes and Fragments*.
- 2 Nevertheless, there is not a direct link between both theories of action, nor do both have a common understanding of the will. Kant needs an "existentialist" notion of will in order to account for free actions. For Stoics, on the contrary, free will is only possible when aligned with the course of natural events (Long 1976: 91). Strictly speaking, in Stoicism will is not a separate faculty (Frede 2011).
- 3 Seidler suggests that such habit of the will resembles the scholastic notion of intellectual habit (Seidler 1981: 154).
- 4 A similar point is found in Kant's notion of practical love and sympathy (vs a merely pathological one) as well as in the way he discusses *humanitas practica* and *humanitas aesthetica* (*MS* 6:456–7; Seidler 1981: ch. 6).
- 5 A similar strategy is to be found in Roman Stoicism. The source for Kant's passage is probably Seneca (Baron 1995: 698; Seneca, *Ep.* 9; *Clem.* 2.6.2–3; 2.6.4).
- 6 In their account of apathy, the Stoics never proposed to remove all feelings from human life, but to produce a state of emotional health (Seneca, *Ep.* 116.1, 85.3, 85.9; *Ira* 1.10.4; Cicero, *Acad.* 1.38–9; Seidler 1981: 437). The Stoics are in no respect aligned with Cynic *insensibility* nor with the Epicurean conception of *ataraxia*. Thus it seems that Kant understood the core of the Stoic position, as the language of health and disease (*MS* 6:484–5) and the role of rational powers they both use suggests.
- 7 The rational agent is naturally interested in happiness as the achievement of an end (*telos*), but not as a target (*skopos*), although the former might be a condition for the latter.
- 8 In his pre-critical writings, Kant's frequent references to the highest good repond to a slightly different interest. He sees in it the answer to the articulation between the *principium diiudicationis* and *principium executionis*, that is, the definition of the moral standard and its capacity to move the will. For Kant, "Epicurus wanted to give virtue and incentive and took from it its inner worth. Zeno wanted to give virtue an inner worth and took from it its incentive. Only Christ gave it inner worth and also an incentive. [...] The incentive based on the other world is also in itself the same as a renunciation of all advantages" (*R* 6838, 19:176). However, in his critical works, Kant introduces the notion of respect for the moral law as a sufficient incentive and, thus, the articulation of *diiudication* and *execution* completely changes (Seidler 1981: 185–94).



- 9 Seidler explores this issue and concludes: “If one is speaking of the satisfaction with one’s *self* rather than one’s *condition*, the claims [of Zeno and Epicurus] are, in their own fashion, true” (Seidler 1981: 140).
- 10 For a detailed discussion of this point and, in general, of the influence of Stoicism on the structure of Kant’s system of duties, see Torralba 2012.
- 11 Garve points out that Cicero’s translation of *kathêkon* as *officium medium*, which he renders as *mittlern Pflicht*, would be better translated as “convenient” (*Schickliche*) action, since in German *Pflicht* is part of the moral terminology.
- 12 Forschner describes the Stoic distinction *kathêkon/katorthôma* as “non-extensional.” We take this terminology and apply it to Kant (Forschner 1995: 197). The distinction itself may have had other sources, such as Crusius’s writings or the Christian contrast between the letter and the spirit of the law (Ritter 1971: 114–5; *KpV* 5:72).
- 13 Seidler holds that Kant also followed Cicero in understanding the doctrine of duties as a “secondary morality.” In this point we do not agree with him, since for Kant, the system of duties is not just for those “who lack the resolve or the ingenuity to strive for a complete and exact realization of moral ideals in all aspects of their lives” (Seidler 1981: 681).

### Further reading

The most complete and useful study on the influence of Stoicism on Kantian ethics remains Seidler’s *The Role of Stoicism in Kant’s Moral Philosophy* (Seidler 1981). Unfortunately, it is a PhD dissertation only available in some university libraries. A detailed and updated study can be found in chapter 3 of Santozki’s *Die Bedeutung antiker Theorien für die Genese und Systematik von Kants Philosophie: Eine Analyse der drei Kritiken* (Santozki 2006). Engstrom and Whiting’s book *Aristotle, Kant and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty* (Engstrom and Whiting 1996) includes chapters on Kant and ancient ethics, particularly relevant is Schneewind’s. Vigo’s volume *Oikeiosis and the Natural Basis of Morality: From Classical Stoicism to Modern Philosophy* (Vigo 2012) will be of interest to those studying the historical reception of Stoicism, from Aquinas to Fichte.

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## PART IV

# The modern world

# 20

## STOICISM IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY GERMAN PHILOSOPHY

*Michael Ure*

This chapter examines nineteenth-century German philosophy's understanding and evaluation of ancient Stoic philosophy, focusing exclusively on Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. In post-Kantian German philosophy ancient Stoicism became a test case for competing modern claims about reason, freedom and happiness. Famously Hegel and Schopenhauer took diametrically opposed positions on the idea of history as the progressive realization of reason and freedom: the former attempts to demonstrate the progressive unfolding of "Spirit" in history; the latter famously seeks to debunk the modern philosophical conceit that the Spirit progressively realizes freedom in history. Yet despite their radical metaphysical disagreement they both regard ancient Stoicism as a noble, yet failed attempt to use reason to rise above the limits of empirical existence. Despite Stoicism's honorable efforts to realize freedom and happiness, Hegel and Schopenhauer both argue that it only succeeds in conceptualizing a lifeless, immobile, empty figure: namely, the sage, a mannequin rather than a living creature.

Nietzsche's engagement with ancient Stoicism is more complex. In his positivistic period he champions the ancient Stoics' eudaimonistic ethics as a counterforce to modern "communitarian" ethics. As his naturalistic turn gathered momentum in the 1880s, however, Nietzsche rejected Stoicism as a failed philosophical therapy motivated by a fear of human flourishing. Nietzsche ultimately judged that the Stoics rightly identified philosophy as a therapeutic exercise, but failed to see their own therapy as both a cause and symptom of illness. Nietzsche's critique of Stoicism opened onto a new naturalistic standpoint for analyzing and evaluating philosophies as conditions of existence. Nietzsche hoped that his analysis of Stoicism's "failed" therapy might contribute to the development of a new, post-classical philosophical therapy.

### **Hegel**

Hegel addresses Stoicism first in section B "Self-Consciousness" in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) and then in section 3, chapter 1, "Rome under the Emperor" in his posthumously published *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1837; Hegel 1900) drawn from his Berlin lectures of 1821, 1824, 1827 and 1831. Stoicism's recognition of the freedom of self-consciousness, he maintains, is an important and necessary stage in the Spirit's progress, but it only expresses

the wish rather than the reality of freedom. Stoicism is wishful thinking. We can briefly consider Hegel's two accounts of Stoicism to see how he arrived at this judgment.

In *The Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel conceives Stoicism as a stage in the dialectical odyssey of self-consciousness towards absolute knowledge. In his teleological history of Spirit, he identifies Stoicism as the first conscious appearance of the "freedom of self-consciousness." In the history of Spirit, he claims, Stoic philosophy first identified consciousness with thought and expressed the first proper awareness that consciousness has the freedom to make judgments of truth and value. "[Stoicism's] principle" he suggests "is that consciousness is a being that thinks and that consciousness holds something to be essentially important, or true or good only in so far as it thinks it to be such" (PS 198, 121).<sup>1</sup>

What gives Stoicism its place in the progressive dialectic of self-consciousness or Spirit? Hegel seems to suggest the Stoicism emerges from the slave's discovery of how its own independence derives from the power of thought. For the slave freedom appears to derive from the power of its thought to make or transform the world. Yet slave consciousness, because it is "forced back into itself," that is, because it cannot identify its freedom with the external world it shapes through its labor, cannot unite the two moments: itself as an independent object and this object as a mode of consciousness. Instead the slave identifies its intrinsic being exclusively with its mode of consciousness as a thinking subject. The slave conceives of freedom as a mode of consciousness or thinking that is independent of its objective condition of enslavement. For slavish self-consciousness its own freedom must appear to reside in its power to think, not in its *particular* objective conditions (PS 197, 120). In this new Stoic perspective self-consciousness or being for itself is entirely identified with thinking. For the slave's new Stoic self-consciousness consists in the view that "in thinking I *am free*, because I am not in an *other*, but remain simply and solely in communion with myself, and the object, which is for me the *essential* being, is in undivided unity my being-for-myself; and my activity in conceptual thinking is a movement within myself" (PS 197, 120).

Now Hegel acknowledges that in one sense the slave's Stoic self-consciousness represents an advance: it recognizes that through thinking the subject can find rational satisfaction in the world, which is the goal of Hegel's dialectic. Stoicism holds that through reason alone self-consciousness can be at one with the world. It can achieve the reconciliation between infinite freedom and finitude through reason without having to engage with another or transform the material world. Stoicism's conception of freedom as pure reason entails a withdrawal from desire and recognition rather than their completion. Stoicism therefore withdraws from the labor that transforms the world and retreats from bonds of recognition rather than moves towards mutual recognition (PS 199, 121).

Hegel argues that the Stoic notion of freedom is also self-undermining: by trying to withdraw from or rise above all concrete, individual particulars into the pure formalistic reason, Stoicism finds itself in the position of having its content *given* to it rather than choosing this content for itself. Since Stoicism is indifferent towards all particular content it cannot establish a criterion of truth or goodness that would allow it to discriminate between particulars (see Veyne 2003: 80–5). "Stoicism," as Hegel explains, "was therefore perplexed when it was asked for what was called a 'criterion of truth as such,' i.e. strictly speaking, for a *content* of thought itself. To the question, *What* is good and true, it again gave for the answer the *contentless* thought: The True and Good shall consist in reasonableness. But this self-identity of thought is again only pure form in which nothing is determined. The true and the good, wisdom and virtue, the general terms beyond which Stoicism cannot get, are therefore [...] no doubt uplifting, but since they cannot in fact produce any expansion of content, they soon become tedious" (PS 200, 122).

In Hegel's view the Stoic's maxim "living in accord with nature" is formally empty: the Stoic can follow this maxim in *any* determinate context. Rather than throwing off his chains, the Stoic reasons they do not matter. "My leg you will fetter" as Epictetus explains "but my moral purpose not even Zeus himself has power to overcome" (*Diss.* 1.1.25). It is in this sense that Hegel repeatedly characterizes Stoic philosophy as purely formal: Stoic agents might legislate their moral purpose, but lacking any content they cannot recognize themselves as agents with the power to bring about changes in the world (Redding 2013: 391). "With the reflection of self-consciousness into the simple thought of itself" as Hegel puts it "the *independent existence* or permanent determinateness that stood over against that reflection has, as a matter of fact, *fallen outside the infinitude of thought*" (*PS* 202, 123, my italics). The Stoic's flight from the world is self-defeating: it leaves him fettered to the particular. "From Hegel's principle that there can be no disembodied spiritual life" as Taylor explains "it follows that he cannot accept a definition of freedom like that of the Stoics, which sees it as an inner condition of man unaffected by his external fate. A purely inner freedom is only a wish, a shadow. It is an important stage of human development when man comes to have this wish, this idea, but it must not be confused with the real thing" (Taylor 1979: 51; see also Gourinat 2005). For Hegel Stoics take refuge from the actual world in the illusory freedom of contentless, formal or abstract thought (Chiereghin 2009: 60).

Hegel sought to explain the genesis of Stoicism's empty, contentless, lifeless form of freedom not only phenomenologically, but also historically (see Russon 2004: 96–7). In *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* Hegel identifies the Stoic conception of freedom as a pathological symptom of the Roman Empire's lack of moral unity. Hegel argues that the decay of political freedom under the Roman Empire, which granted the emperor absolute sovereignty and individuals only abstract, "lifeless" private rights, compelled the latter to render themselves utterly indifferent to the real world. The Stoic ideal that one could achieve freedom through reason alone answered to this need to flee from a world that offered individuals no scope to exercise their freedom. Stoicism gave these individuals an illusion of freedom in the context of universal enslavement. Stoicism became popular under the Roman Empire, he argues, because its atomizing despotism made the mind in isolation the only impregnable spiritual fortress (Shklar 1976: 62). In a political world in which the emperor ruled without limits abstract, private "individuals were perfectly equal (slavery made only a trifling distinction) and without any political rights" (*LPH* 328).<sup>2</sup> Under these conditions "the whole state of things urged them to yield themselves to fate, and to strive for a perfect indifference to life – an indifference which [one] sought [...] in freedom of thought." Stoicism, as well as Epicureanism and Skepticism, served this goal by "rendering the soul absolutely indifferent to everything the real world had to offer" (*LPH* 329).

Hegel maintains that the Stoic's abstract individualistic Notion of freedom could only become a concrete reality in the context of the ethical community of a constitutional State. The Stoics rightly identified freedom as the *telos* of self-consciousness, but they did not recognize that freedom required more than abstract thought alone. The Stoic, as Shklar sums up Hegel's criticism, "thinks himself unfettered in thinking and does not realize that his is the freedom of the void" (Shklar 1976: 62).

## **Schopenhauer**

Schopenhauer analyzes Stoicism in the final section of Book 1 of his *The World as Will and Representation* (1818). He develops and expands some of his key points in volume 2 (1844), chapter 16, "On the Use of Our Practical Reason and on Stoicism." Here Schopenhauer

asks: Can practical reason (or abstract concepts) guide human conduct; and if so, to what extent? He investigates whether knowledge itself can “withdraw” us from the sorrows and miseries of every kind that fill our life” (*WWR* I 87).<sup>3</sup>

In this context Schopenhauer identifies Stoicism as “the highest point to which man can attain by the mere use of his faculty of reason” (*WWR* I 86). He therefore presents the Stoics as the best test for the claim that practical reason can guide us to “happiness,” conceived of as undisturbed tranquillity. Schopenhauer’s first step is to define practical reason. He conceives our species as *homo duplex*: we experience the world through abstract concepts and immediate perceptions. Whereas animals are “restricted to representations of perceptions immediately present to them in time, humans, by virtue of knowledge in the abstract, comprehend not only the narrow and actual present, but also the whole past and future together with the wide realm of possibility” (*WWR* I 84). Through practical reason, he suggests, we can become akin to spectators calmly observing and understanding events in terms of abstract concepts. For Schopenhauer Stoic philosophy is the perfect development of this human capacity for rational, abstract spectatorship. By taking the spectator’s view from above, he adds, Stoics cultivate the kind of equanimity that enables heroes to undertake noble action in defiance of their own fears and grief. Heroism, he suggests, requires Stoic self-command (*WWR* I 85–6).

From this elaboration of practical reason Schopenhauer proceeds to examine in more detail exactly how Stoic philosophy facilitates heroic self-mastery. Following Epictetus, Schopenhauer observes that for Stoics the source of our unhappiness lies in our false judgments, not in things themselves. According to the Stoics, our emotions derive from a failure of knowledge or insight. He illustrates this view with Epictetus’s famous maxim: “Things themselves do not disturb human beings, but rather opinions about things” (*Ench.* 5). If the source of our unhappiness lies in our opinions then it seems to follow that better insight will eliminate this unhappiness. If we use our practical reason to realize that animate and inanimate nature thwarts our will we will not suffer from emotional perturbations. The Stoic philosophy, as Schopenhauer conceives it, entails the view that through proper knowledge of the fundamental characteristic of life, namely its indifference to our happiness, we can eliminate our emotional disturbances (*WWR* II 149).

Similarly, again following Epictetus, Schopenhauer observes that the Stoic sage will only value that which is under his control, his judgment or assent, and remain indifferent to everything that remains beyond his control. On the Stoic view, as he sees it, every pleasure and pain derives from the illusion that we can control external goods or possessions. The Stoic sage therefore “always holds himself aloof from jubilation and sorrow” by seeing through this illusion and recognizing that external goods are necessarily beyond our control. By doing so he will obtain true joy: *ataraxia*. “In keeping with the end and spirit of the Stoics” as Schopenhauer summarizes “*Epictetus* begins with one idea and constantly keeps returning to it as the *core of his wisdom*. The idea is this: we should ponder very carefully indeed and distinguish between what depends on us and what does not. If we take no account at all of the latter, we can be sure to remain free of all pain, suffering and anxiety” (*WWR* I 88–9). Schopenhauer argues that given this knowledge of nature the Stoic must practice control without restraint since the desires cannot be pursued without causing emotional turmoil. In order “to obtain the greatest possible painlessness in life” as he put it “[the Stoic] sacrifices the keenest possible joys and pleasures” (*WWR* II 150).

In sharp contrast to Hegel, however, Schopenhauer does not object to Stoic indifference, only to its feasibility. Schopenhauer understands Stoicism as a perennial, yet *false* hope that philosophy or reason might lift us above the storms of reality. Against the Stoics

Schopenhauer claims that reason often fails to exercise control over desires. In the struggle between practical reason and the forces of immediate perception, he argues, we often see that the latter is victorious. Indeed, Schopenhauer claims that the general law in such cases is the opposite of the law of scales: i.e. the most insignificant motive outweighs even the most reasoned motive just as long as the former is “near” or “close” (*WWR* II 149). Our faculty of practical reason, which attempts to guide our conduct, is therefore at the mercy of that which “is so near to us that it conceals everything else, and we are no longer able to see anything but it” (*WWR* II 149). Drawing on this general Humean skepticism Schopenhauer proceeds to criticize the Stoics’ particular defense of practical reason.

Schopenhauer develops his case against Stoic ethics by arguing first that their theory of preferred indifferents betrays their claim to live independently of external goods. The Stoics’ doctrine rests on the assumption that we can “in all circumstance possess and enjoy externals without suffering or distress as long as we keep in mind the worthlessness and dispensableness of such good things, on the one hand, and their uncertainty and perishableness on the other” (*WWR* II 155). Stoics, he claims, proclaim their indifference while in practice enjoying all the goods of the world. They merely judge that externals are dispensable, rather than actually renouncing them like the Cynics. The Stoics are to the Cynics as “well-fed Benedictines and Augustinians are to the Franciscans and Capuchins” (*WWR* II 156). Stoicism corrupts Cynicism. Schopenhauer challenges the Stoic assumption that we can enjoy external goods without these goods becoming objects of desire or necessities. Possessions, he claims, possess. Everything we become accustomed to, he argues, becomes a necessity. And once these goods become necessities the Stoic will desire them, fear losing them and suffer from their actual loss. “The will” as Schopenhauer ominously puts it “cannot be trifled with” (*WWR* II 156).

In a second argument, Schopenhauer, following Augustine, argues that the Stoics’ approval of suicide unwittingly concedes the impossibility of obtaining happiness through the exercise of reason (see Augustine, *De civ. D.* 19.4). The Stoics own doctrines, he holds, subvert their faith in reason. The Stoic’s recommendation of suicide in certain circumstances, he argues, reveals the hollowness of their philosophical belief that reason alone is sufficient to achieve the blissful life (*WWR* I 90–1).

Unlike Augustine, however, Schopenhauer also commends the Stoics’ ultimately doomed attempt to use practical reason to raise us above the suffering of life. “Stoic ethics” he acknowledges “is in fact a very valuable and estimable attempt to adapt that great privilege of humanity, reason, to an important and salutary end, namely that of raising us above the suffering and pain that every life encounters” (*WWR* I 90). Stoicism, as he puts it “*allows us to participate to the highest degree in that dignity which attaches to us as rational beings distinct from animals*” (*WWR* I 90). Yet in their pride and conceit, he argues, the Stoics failed to recognize that passions always shipwreck the frail barque of reason.

## **Nietzsche**

Nietzsche was well versed in Stoicism. Nietzsche was steeped in Stoicism through his classical education at the famous Schulpforta Gymnasium (1858–64) and his subsequent training as a classical philologist at Bonn and then Leipzig (1864–69) (Nussbaum 1994: 149). Nietzsche was attracted to Stoicism in both theory and practice. At Schulpforta Nietzsche set fire to his own hand to demonstrate to his skeptical school friends the truth of Livy’s anecdote about the Roman patriot Mucius Scaevola who thrust his hand in the Etruscan enemies’ cauldron to demonstrate his indifference to pain and contempt for their threats (Livy 2.12–13; Hayman 1980: 28). Roman Stoics celebrated Mucius’s action as worthy of greater praise than



virtuous actions undertaken in safety (Seneca, *Ep.* 66.49–53). At university Nietzsche published his first three works on the sources of Diogenes Laertius's *Lives and Opinions of the Philosophers*, one of the major sources of Stoic thought (see *KGW* 2.1: 75–167; 169–90; 191–245).<sup>4</sup> Drawing on Max Oehler's research, Nussbaum notes that Seneca's and Epictetus's books are among the most heavily read and annotated in his library (Nussbaum 1994: 149 n. 35; Oehler 1942; see also Brobjer 2003). In his inaugural Basel lecture, "Homer and Classical Philology" (1869), Nietzsche memorably invoked Seneca's lament that the rise of sophistic teaching had transformed philosophy, the study of wisdom, into philology, the study of mere words: *Itaque quae philosophia fuit, facta philologia est* (*Ep.* 108.23). In what he calls a "confession of faith," Nietzsche declared his intention of performing the reverse operation: turning philology into philosophy; that is to say, of transforming a discipline that teaches us how to commentate into one that teaches us how to live (*KGW* 2.1: 248–69). In his first confession of faith Nietzsche endorsed Seneca's and the Stoics' conception that philosophy ought to teach us how to live, not debate.

It is not until the so-called positivistic works of his middle period, however, that Nietzsche addresses Hellenistic philosophical *therapeia*, including Stoicism, in any systematic fashion (*D* 131, 133, 137, 139, 546, 563; *GS* 12, 304–6, 326).<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche also revisits the Stoics in his later, so-called "mature" works (e.g. *BGE* 9, 198).

Nietzsche draws on Stoicism in several ways. First he explicitly acknowledges the significance of the Stoic (and Epicurean) model of philosophy as therapy (e.g. *WS* 7). Nietzsche borrowed from these schools the idea that the point of philosophy is to allow individuals to realize the good life by eliminating the false beliefs that cause emotional disturbance. By and large Nietzsche understands his own critique of metaphysics in this vein (i.e. as a therapeutic exercise). However, he makes *metaphysical* beliefs the object of a post-classical therapy. By eliminating metaphysics, he supposes, philosophers might also eliminate the emotional troubles deriving from its cognitive errors. In *Daybreak* Nietzsche glosses Epictetus's famous dictum (*Ench.* 5), arguing that a great deal of human distress is due to the philosophical lunacies of metaphysics: "It is not *things*, but opinions about *things that have absolutely no existence*, which have so disturbed mankind!" (*D* 563). Nietzsche clearly believes that by using philosophy to eliminate such metaphysical "opinions" he might free mankind from emotional disturbances (*HH* 27). Arguably, as we shall see later, Nietzsche carried forward Stoicism's therapeutic model of philosophy even when he later rejected Stoicism's rationalism.

Second, Nietzsche draws on Stoic ethical *eudaimonism* to contest what he saw as the overarching morality of his age, which he identifies with the rise of a collectivist or communitarian ethos that gave priority to maximizing the security of the lowest common denominator. Nietzsche identifies a strong family resemblance between a whole range of modern moral and political ideologies and principles, including liberalism, utilitarianism, Schopenhauer's morality of pity, and all forms of communitarianism such as Hegel's thesis of the primacy of *Sittlichkeit*. Nietzsche claims that these ideologies and principles are refractions of a "herd" morality that aims to eliminate all fear in collective life. In contesting the overarching morality of his age Nietzsche explicitly singles out ancient Stoicism's ethical *eudaimonism* as a praiseworthy alternative to the "maximin" principle (i.e. the principle of maximizing the prospects of the least well-off) he believed fundamentally shapes most modern ideologies.

For this reason Nietzsche sees merit in Stoic philosophy precisely where Hegel and Schopenhauer found fault. As we have seen, Hegel conceived the Stoics' purely internal freedom as a way station on the road to a more complete notion of collective freedom. Hegel saw the Christian hope of metaphysical reconciliation as one step beyond Stoicism's conception of abstract freedom and his own "communitarian" ethics as the fullest realization

of the Notion of freedom. Schopenhauer identified the Stoics' *nil admirari* as a recipe for happiness that broke down before *brute factum* of the metaphysical will to life. Stoic philosophy, he held, cannot make the unbearable bearable. In collapsing under the weight of its own internal contradictions Schopenhauer argued that the failure of Stoicism points towards the necessity of a complete nihilistic devaluation of life. By contrast, in his positivistic period Nietzsche defends Stoicism's ethic of rational sovereignty against Christian, Hegelian and Schopenhauerian versions of modern communitarian ethics. And he also defends Stoic fortitude against the second and final stage of Schopenhauer's ethics: nihilistic life denial and resignation.

In ancient Stoic philosophy Nietzsche believed he had found a salutary reminder of an ancient ethic based on pride in oneself and love of fate that stood in sharp opposition to the self-contempt and hatred of this world that he saw as the basis of Christian and secularized versions of Christian ethics. Nietzsche therefore draws on Stoicism's ethics of individual *eudaimonism* as a plausible and appealing alternative to the collectivist moralities that he saw as the "moral undercurrent of the age" (D 132). Nietzsche laments that Stoicism had become unfashionable in the nineteenth century:

How the overall moral judgments have shifted! The great men of antique morality, Epictetus for instance, knew nothing of the now normal glorification of thinking of others, of living for others, in light of our moral fashion they would have to be called downright immoral, for they strove with all their might *for* their *ego* and *against* feeling with others that is to say, with the sufferings and moral frailties of others!

(D 131)

Nietzsche identifies both Christian ethics and its secularized versions such as Hegelian ethics as a falling away from the antique Stoic ideal. Contra Hegel he commends the Stoics' ethical *eudaimonism* for remaining indifferent or hostile to Christian hopes for metaphysical reconciliation. Nietzsche values Stoicism's ethics of individual happiness precisely because he saw it as incompatible with the Christian morality of humility and grace. He maligns Christianity's metaphysical idealism as the wishful thinking of weak-willed slaves who are unable to sustain themselves without such illusions. It is Christian "slaves," he maintains, who need redemptive illusions of metaphysical reconciliation, not the Stoic who uses his reason to achieve self-possession and self-command. In this period Nietzsche applauds the conventional ancient Stoic wisdom contained in its account of the sage. He pinpoints and affirms the general Stoic ideal of rational self-sufficiency through independence of all externals:

*Movable goods and landed property.* – If life has treated a man like a brigand, and has taken from him all it could in the way of honours, friends, adherents, health, possessions of all kinds, he may perhaps, after the first shock, discover that he is *richer* than before. For it is only now that he knows what is truly his, what no brigand is able to get his hands on; so that perhaps he emerges out of all this plundering and confusion wearing the noble aspect of a great landed proprietor.

(AOM 343)<sup>6</sup>

Nietzsche clearly implies here that our inalienable property, which we cannot lose in any circumstance, is our reason or capacity to assent to the things that happen rather than to hope or wish that they were otherwise. Nobility is the exercise of rational self-command (see Rutherford 2011).

Nietzsche celebrates the Stoics' supreme bravery in remaining self-sufficient rather than projecting their hopes into a metaphysical world. Nietzsche recognizes that Stoics realize freedom and happiness through the use of their own practical reason; they do not give license to the hope or wish that things should be other than they are. Epictetus's model Stoic, he notes, "believes strictly in reason" and "lacks all fear of God" (D 546). For Stoics practical reason alone is sufficient to realize individual freedom and happiness. Through reason they free themselves from the emotional judgments that hold them hostage to fortune. Nietzsche applauds Stoicism for precisely the same reason Hegel criticized it: namely that the Stoic conception of freedom has no determinate content and is compatible with *any* circumstances, including the universal enslavement characteristic of the Roman Empire:

Epictetus' [...] ideal human being [...] is without class and possible in every class [...] He differs from the *Christian*, above all in that the Christian lives in *hope*, in the promise of inexpressible glories, in that he accepts gifts and expects and receives the best he knows at the hands of divine love and grace and not at his own hands: while Epictetus does not hope and does not accept the best he knows as a gift – he possesses it, he holds it bravely in his own hands, he defends it against the whole world if the world wants to rob him of it.

(D 546)

Nietzsche also applauds ancient Stoic ethical *eudaimonism* as a counter to the collectivist or "communitarian" moral undercurrents of his age, which he conceives as a hypertrophy of one aspect of Christian ethics: its ethics of altruism and compassion (D 132). Nietzsche uses Stoic ethical individualism to challenge this moral undercurrent. Nietzsche characterizes it as a politics of compassion, sympathy and mutual recognition primarily motivated by a collective fear of aristocratic excellence. This broad characterization of the modern ethos as a "politics of fear" allows him to include within it a range of moral and political philosophies that we currently see as competing ideologies, including liberalism, utilitarianism and communitarianism.<sup>7</sup> With its thesis of the primacy of *Sittlichkeit* and its notion of the community as "ethical substance" or ground of human freedom Hegel's ethics and politics exemplify the moral undercurrent Nietzsche uses Stoicism to attack. As Nietzsche conceives it, Stoic ethics frees individuals from communal fetters, rather than integrating them into communities based on mutual sympathy or recognition.

In this context Nietzsche identifies this Stoic ethic as an *antidote* to the communitarian idea that happiness consists in adapting oneself to the needs of the whole. Nietzsche conceives Stoicism as an ethics that addresses itself to the individual for the sake of his own happiness. The Stoics, as he observes, strove with all their might for their ego – that is, to maintain their invulnerability or sovereignty through the exercise of reason alone – and against feeling with others. Nietzsche identifies Stoic philosophy as a welcome relief from the modern communitarian ethos that judges "good" all membership-building drives, especially the drives to sympathy and recognition, and "evil" all that separates the individual from this self-sacrificing commitment to collective security or the happiness of the greatest number (D 132). At this stage Nietzsche follows the Stoics by giving primacy to individual freedom and happiness, tying these to the exercise of reason (D 107).

Against Hegelians and others Nietzsche argues that conditions of mutual recognition and sympathy stifle rather than facilitate individual freedom and flourishing. Mutual recognition or sympathy is not a marker of moral action, but a pathology: it corrupts individuals' reason and inflames their emotions. Nietzsche conceives philosophies that defend the primacy of

*Sittlichkeit* and mutual recognition as intellectual masks of social timidity or fear. According to Nietzsche, what motivates this ethos is a fear of individuals who pursue their own highest flourishing independently of the collective desire for happiness or security of the greatest number (*D* 174; *BGE* 201). On this view Hegelian communitarianism merely masks a slavish need for security. Nietzsche then celebrates Stoic ethical *eudaimonism* as an untimely reminder that the communitarian morality has not always been conceived of as the highest embodiment of reason and freedom. Nietzsche genealogically debunks modern communitarianism and its Hegelian variants as expressions of a fear of freedom, rather than the *sine qua non* of freedom. As he describes it, modern ethics is a “tyranny of timidity” (*D* 174).

Nietzsche also takes the side of Stoic fortitude against both Schopenhauer’s transitional virtue of pity and his ultimate morality of asceticism or nihilism. Nietzsche conceives Schopenhauerian morality of pity as yet another refraction of the modern communitarian ethos. Unlike Schopenhauer he admires the Stoics’ denial of the value of pity and their refusal to make suffering an objection to life (Nussbaum 1994; Bertino 2007). Nietzsche’s stoic egoists are not susceptible to fear and grief because they take an impartial, third-party view of their *own* and others’ experiences rather than assume the first-person point of view, with its irrational exaggerations (*D* 137); they are impervious to anger and resentment because they affirm necessity rather than seek or create objects of blame for misfortune (*AOM* 386); they treat external goods like honor as matters of indifference (*D* 522); and they exercise their reason to endure suffering rather than relinquish their self-command or independence (*D* 546).

Nietzsche claims that by one important measure this Stoicism is a higher morality than Christian and Schopenhauerian pity:

*Said to be higher!* You say that the morality of pity is a higher morality than that of stoicism? Prove it! But note that “higher” and “lower” in morality is not to be measured by a moral yardstick: for there is no absolute morality. So take your yardstick from elsewhere and – watch out!

(*D* 139)

Nietzsche believes his critique of the metaphysical grounds of morality eliminates the idea of “absolute morality.” Against Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer Nietzsche rejects the very notion that morality has any metaphysical grounds. As we have seen, Nietzsche’s alternative yardstick for measuring the relative value of Stoicism and the modern moral undercurrent is a conception of rational self-command. Christianity and its secularized versions, he suggests, eliminate self-command. Christian theology inflames our emotions by tying our prospects for redemption to God’s uncontrollable grace and the modern ethics of pity makes us susceptible to all the fears and weaknesses of others. The modern philosophy of pity, he suggests demands that we imbibe the experiences of others as if they were our own; that is, it demands that we experience others’ grief and distress with the same kind of emotional intensity as we experience our own. This philosophy, he claims, “would destroy us and in a very short time” (*D* 137). Nietzsche suggests then that the modern ethos of pity pathologically overburdens individuals and compels them to concentrate on adapting themselves to the needs of the weak, suffering majority. He conceives pity as a moral instrument or strategy that ensures that the strongest or highest types adapt to the needs of, rather than exploit or sacrifice, lesser types (see *GS* 21). By contrast Stoic philosophy, Nietzsche implies, enables us to make “the burden of our own as light as possible” by seeing our own and others’ misfortunes impartially or objectively (*D* 137).

Nietzsche celebrates Stoicism not only as an individual therapy of desire, but also as a political therapy. That is to say, he identifies Stoic philosophy as a political therapy that might cure free spirits of the tender-heartedness of modern morality and its politics of fear and timidity. Against this modern politics Nietzsche defends an illiberal politics. Nietzsche's politics opposes the principle that politics should aim to eliminate all unavoidable fear, suffering and cruelty. Nietzsche's politics gives license instead to the pursuit of "more distant goals *even at the cost of the suffering of others*" (D 146). Nietzsche identifies Stoicism, with its insensibility towards suffering, one's own as much as others', as an ally in the development of his illiberal politics (see Ure 2014).

As Nietzsche's naturalistic project developed momentum in the 1880s, however, he re-evaluates Stoicism. Gradually Stoicism became for Nietzsche an object of severe criticism rather than a laudable ethical *eudaimonism*. Arguably, despite Nietzsche's explicit repudiation of Stoicism, his own ideal of *amor fati* and his doctrine of eternal recurrence are implicitly indebted to and express a type of Stoicism, in particular what Sellars calls "cosmic Stoicism" (see Hadot 2002: 144–5; Sellars 2006; Nabais 2006: 85–96; Long 2006: 281–2; Ure 2009). Here, however, I want to concentrate on Nietzsche's explicit analysis of Stoicism. Nietzsche shifts from advocating Stoicism's ethical *eudaimonism* as an antidote to modern "communitarian" morality to sharply criticizing its extirpation of the passions and idealization of tranquil self-control. Rather than favorably contrasting Stoic *eudaimonism* against the Christian, Hegelian and Schopenhauerian moral undercurrents of his age, Nietzsche begins to criticize it against his *own* emerging ethics and politics. He eventually rejects Stoic philosophy as a guide to life and model of health, and comes to view it as a pathology disguised as a philosophical cure. Nietzsche's critique of Stoic *ataraxia* also led him to investigate what we might call broader "metaphilosophical" issues. We will examine the metaphilosophical reflections Nietzsche drew from his analysis of Stoicism in closing.

We can distinguish three lines of criticism in Nietzsche's turn against Stoic ethics. First, Nietzsche genealogically debunks Stoicism by tracing it to a fear of chance and risk. Stoicism, he implies, has "ignoble" or embarrassing origins. Second, he argues that Stoic "joy" is of a lesser kind, a mere negative hedonism that conceals a higher type of joy. Nietzsche conceives his "higher" type of joy as incompatible with Stoic tranquility. Indeed Nietzsche defines his conception of human flourishing specifically in opposition to Stoic *ataraxia*. Nietzschean "joy" gives *some* license to the passions.

However, Nietzsche does not contest Stoicism exclusively on the terrain of *eudaimonism*. After taking cognizance of Darwinian and evolutionary theories Nietzsche seeks to establish new naturalistic principles for evaluating ethical judgments and perspectives. With his turn to ethical naturalism he evaluates Stoicism in terms of its contribution to the species' preservation and power rather than individual "happiness." Nietzsche maintains that if we assess Stoicism from this naturalistic standpoint it turns out that its *eudaimonism* is at odds with the species' needs. Third then from this new naturalistic vantage point Nietzsche maintains that Stoicism impedes the kind of species' learning processes that take place through the passions. Stoic ethics, he implies, deprives the species of the intelligence of the emotions. The passions Nietzsche holds are necessary conditions of existence: they help sustain and expand the species' mastery of nature. Nietzsche shifts from endorsing Stoicism's ideal of rational self-command to criticizing and rejecting its definition of human flourishing as a pathological limitation on the cultivation and expression of the drive to power that he believes characterizes all passions (BGE 198). Nietzsche takes the view that the flourishing of the highest human types requires that they cultivate and intensify the drive to power in the passions. Against the Stoics then Nietzsche revalues the passions not only as the source of a higher type of joy, but also

crucially because they are necessary conditions of the species' full flourishing. Let us consider each of these three claims in turn.

In the early 1880s Nietzsche begins to crystallize his challenge to Stoicism's fundamental desideratum, the ideal of *ataraxia* or *apatheia*. Nietzsche rejects the Stoic goal of tranquillity (see Elveton 2004; Ure 2009; Armstrong 2013). Echoing Hegel's claim that self-consciousness transcended Stoicism out of boredom, Nietzsche had earlier likened the sage's tranquillity to "the monotony of a cloudless sky" (*WS* 313). In *The Gay Science* (1882) Nietzsche cashes out this claim about Stoicism as boring or monotonous. Here he distinguishes Stoicism's joyful wisdom from a Nietzschean alternative.

The Stoics, Nietzsche observes, correctly believing that the pleasures are intrinsically tied to distress, and wishing to get off this emotional roller-coaster, "desired as little pleasure as possible in order to derive as little pain as possible from life" (*GS* 12). As Seneca explained: "Pleasure [*voluptas*] unless it has been kept within bounds, tends to rush headlong into the abyss of sorrow" (*Ep.* 23.6). Nietzsche maintains that "pleasure and unpleasure are so intertwined that whoever wants as much as possible of one must also have as much as possible of the other – that whoever wants to learn to 'jubilate up to the heavens' must also be prepared for 'grief unto death'" (*GS* 12). According to Nietzsche, we still face the same choice as that which confronted the ancients: "either as little displeasure as possible" or "as much displeasure as possible as the price for the growth of a bounty of refined pleasures and joys that hitherto have seldom been tasted" (*GS* 12). Nietzsche poses an either/or: either the Stoic's cloudless monotony at the price of a diminished capacity for pleasure, or the intensification of joy at the price of greater suffering. Nietzsche opts for an ethical *eudaimonism* that replaces *ataraxia* with an alternative ideal: the maximization of suffering for the sake of the maximization of joy. Science, he suggests, "might yet be found to be the great giver of pain! – and then its counterforce might at the same time be found: its immense capacity for letting new galaxies of joy flare up!" (*GS* 12). Nietzsche's rejection of Stoic *ataraxia* necessarily entails a revaluation of the passions as constituents of human flourishing. If we are to maximize the sources of distress for the sake of maximizing our joy, as Nietzsche urges, then we must also revalue those passions that make us hostage to fortune.

Against the Stoics Nietzsche aims to identify and defend a higher type of joy, or "superabundant joy," that hinges on maintaining and intensifying our vulnerability to chance (*GS* 326). If Stoic joy (*gaudium*) is a purely internal state, a fortress heavily defended against the "gifts of chance," Nietzschean joy is an incorporation or mediation of "external" goods, which requires an openness to chance, registered by passions like fear and hope. Stoic philosophers or "soul doctors," Nietzsche suggests "lied to us about the unhappiness of passionate people [...] they knew very well about the superabundant happiness of this type of person, but kept a deathly silence about it, since it constituted a refutation of their theory on which happiness arises only with the annihilation of passion and the silencing of the will!" (*GS* 326).

Far from praising Stoic *eudaimonism* as an exception to the moral undercurrent of his age, Nietzsche now identifies it as continuous with the contemporary moral timidity that aimed at eliminating all sources of fear and danger. If Hegelian communitarianism and Schopenhauerian pity adapt or sacrifice individuals to the whole, ensuring they pose no danger to the collective, then the Stoic ideal of *ataraxia* eliminates those passions that might motivate individuals to risk their own or others' security and "happiness" for the sake of a higher goal. Nietzsche now identifies Stoics as petty, weak individuals whose indifference or insensibility is motivated by a fearful prudence that seeks to limit the risk or danger of a passionate life.

Nietzsche applies this criticism to all the ancient forms of ethical *eudaimonism*: "All those moralities that address themselves to the individual for the sake of his 'happiness' [...] what

are they but counsels for behaviour in relation to the degree of *dangerousness* in which the individual lives with himself; recipes against the passions” (BGE 198). The Stoic’s “indifference and statue like coldness against the hot-headed folly of the affects,” he argues “is, measured intellectually, worth very little and not by a long shot ‘science,’ much less ‘wisdom,’ but rather to say it once more, three more times, prudence, prudence, prudence mixed with stupidity, stupidity, stupidity” (BGE 198). Nietzsche implies that the Stoic belief that “the real good may be coveted with safety” (Seneca, *Ep.* 23.6–7) is motivated by the desire to only covet that which entails no risk or danger. Stoic ethics on this view is little more than a rationalization of prudence: Stoics judge the external world as indifferent in order to limit their exposure to the danger of the passions (see Inwood 2005: 249–70). For this reason, he suggests, the Stoics advised and administered a spiritual dietetics aimed at making one insensible, or incapable of having evaluative responses. “The Stoic” he observes “trains himself to swallow stones and worms, glass shards and scorpions without nausea; he wants his stomach to be ultimately insensible to everything that the chance of existence pours into him” (GS 306). In the book of ethics, he suggests, Stoicism belongs to a chapter entitled “Morality as Timidity” (BGE 198). For Nietzsche the unconscious Stoic criterion of value is safety or security first and last. Fear is the “reason” underpinning Stoic ethics (see Nussbaum 1994: 160).

Nietzsche concedes that the “extreme self-control” Stoics achieve through their spiritual dietetics might enable them to become “*great*” (*gross*) understood perhaps in terms of moral rigidity and sensible impermeability. Yet this so-called “greatness,” he stresses, entails a profound impoverishment: it comes at the cost of the highest forms of joy and also at the expense of reason or cognitive capacities. Stoics may turn themselves into fortresses or citadels, armed against the gifts of chance but in doing so, Nietzsche exclaims, they become “impoverished and cut off from the most beautiful fortuities of the soul! And indeed from all further *instruction*! For one must be able to lose oneself if one wants to learn something from things that we ourselves are not” (GS 305).

Nietzsche complains that Stoicism not only conceals a fuller, superabundant conception of flourishing, but in doing so cuts us off from the learning processes that the passions facilitate. Nietzsche conceives the passions as necessary instruments of a learning process rather than as cognitive errors. Stoicism’s extirpation of the passions, he implies, retards species’ learning. In other words, Nietzsche frames the issue of the value of the passions not only in terms of individual happiness or flourishing, but also in terms of the categories established by the nineteenth-century evolutionary perspective. This new naturalistic context gave Nietzsche the scope to evaluate the passions in terms of their capacity to facilitate the species’ mastery of its environment.

Darwinian evolutionary theory maintained that the mechanism of natural selection “selects” new variations not on the basis of pleasure/pain, but on the basis of whether they give a species a slight edge in the struggle for existence. The crucial shift in Nietzsche’s evaluation of *eudaimonistic* moralities like Stoicism follows a similar line of thought: that the passions cause pain, disturbance or turmoil is not a valid objection against them if the criterion of value is species’ preservation and power rather than pleasure or happiness. “There is as much wisdom in pain” Nietzsche asserts “as in pleasure: like pleasure, pain is one of the prime *species-preserving forces*. If it weren’t, it would have perished long ago: that it hurts is no argument against it [...] They are the heroic human beings, the great pain-bringers of humanity, those few or rare ones need the same apology as pain itself [...]. They are eminently *species-preserving* and *species-enhancing forces*” (GS 318). Nietzsche acknowledges that like Odysseus the “hardy seafarer ‘Man’ must have learnt to adjust his sails in a thousand ways” including the *Stoic* adjustment of pulling in his sails or contracting himself at the sign of great danger “otherwise

he would have gone under too quickly and the ocean would have swallowed him too quickly” (GS 318).

Nietzsche’s rejection of Stoic *eudaimonism* is symptomatic of his shift away from hedonistic to “naturalistic” criteria of preservation and power. From this new perspective Nietzsche indicts all eudaimonistic moralities, including Stoicism, because they measure the value of things in accordance with pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain, he argues, are “mere epiphenomena and wholly secondary” measures (BGE 225). The primary measure, he implies, is the expansion of the species’ power. To the extent that Stoicism measures the value of things according to pleasure and pain, and idealizes the minimization of pain, he argues, it diminishes humankind (BGE 225). “You want if possible – and there is no more insane ‘if possible’ – to abolish suffering. And we? It really seems that we would have it higher and worse than ever” (BGE 225).<sup>8</sup>

With his shift to a naturalistic perspective Nietzsche not only re-evaluates Stoic *eudaimonism*, he also reconsiders philosophy itself from a naturalistic standpoint. Nietzsche’s critique of Stoic *ataraxia* not only transforms his ethical perspective, it also led him to investigate what we might call broader metaphilosophical issues. In criticizing Stoicism from a naturalistic standpoint Nietzsche begins to develop the view that the significance of all philosophies lies in how they sustain particular conditions of life. Nietzsche thought that his diagnosis of Stoicism supplied him with a key to unlocking the nature of philosophy itself, or the psychology of philosophy, as an expression of the will to power. Nietzsche observes that Stoic philosophy, especially its pantheism, creates a moralized conception of nature that glorifies and generalizes the Stoic disposition (BGE 9). It made nature an image of the Stoic writ large: a perfect or rational order. According to Nietzsche, Stoicism’s conception of nature and the ethical prescription it drew from this conception – “live according to nature” – function to order and moderate specific drives.

Nietzsche makes two significant points about Stoicism on this score: first, that both Stoic physics and ethics function to justify and glorify a disposition that unconsciously needs or seeks stillness, calm or, as he put it more critically, “fossilization” (GS 326). Stoic physics and ethics, as he diagnoses it, are a function of a need to still the quick of life. Nietzsche maintains that the Stoics do not derive their physics and ethics from the exercise of autonomous reason. Rather Stoic physics and ethics are the products of a compulsive, irrational need to eliminate painful, threatening stimulus. Through their physics the Stoics compelled themselves, “rigidly-hypnotically,” to see nature falsely as a divinely ordered cosmos rather than as a wasteful, purposeless and indifferent being. Nietzsche generalizes from his analysis of Stoicism to all philosophy:

But this is an old and everlasting story: what happened in old times with the Stoics still happens today, as soon as ever a philosophy begins to believe in itself. It always creates the world in its own image; it cannot do otherwise; philosophy is this tyrannical impulse itself, the most spiritual will to power, the will to “creation of the world,” the will to the *causa prima*.

(BGE 9)

On the basis of this analysis of Stoicism Nietzsche maintains that philosophy itself is a special type of drive, “the most spiritual will to power,” a drive that creates a world in its own image. This philosophical “drive” invents logic, physics and ethics in order to sustain particular types of lives and their conditions of existence. Different moral philosophies, he claims, are analogous to different climates: they allow some types of existence to



flourish while limiting others. In Nietzsche's view all moral philosophies either enhance or weaken life.

Second, Nietzsche characterizes Stoicism as a failed philosophical therapy. Rather than curing its patients, he suggests, Stoicism's principle of "rational" self-control afflicts them with a peculiar disease: namely, an irritability at all natural inclinations or drives (GS 305). Stoics' physiological and psychological needs, he claims, unconsciously generate the particular philosophical doctrines that cater to these needs. The Stoic's unconscious needs are for "stillness, mildness, patience, medicine, balm in some sense" (GS Pref. 2). Stoic pantheism and ethics establish the conditions necessary for those who seek refuge in stillness or statue-like immobility to counteract the pain and tumult of the passions. Nietzsche implies that Stoicism *causes* this disease by condemning natural inclinations as the product of erroneous judgments. Stoicism is also a *symptom* of this peculiar disease insofar as its physics and ethics derive from and glorify a disposition that cannot bear the "hot-headed folly of the affects" (BGE 198). Nietzsche overturns the Stoic judgment of its own philosophy: far from being a philosophical therapy that cures individuals of their illnesses, it is a symptom that reproduces and exacerbates a disease. We have seen on what grounds Nietzsche identifies Stoicism as a symptom of an "illness": it caters to and creates individuals who are too weak and fearful to live through their passions, and in doing so it eliminates one of the key sources of the species' enhancement: the passions.

On the basis of his diagnosis of Stoicism Nietzsche formulates a new naturalistic hypothesis for analyzing all philosophies. Nietzsche wants to test or "risk the proposition: what was at stake in all philosophizing hitherto was not at all 'truth' but rather something else – let us say health, future, growth, power, life" (GS Pref. 2). Yet even as Nietzsche rejects Stoicism as a failed philosophical therapy he nevertheless seeks to retain its ideal of the philosophical physician and with it the belief that philosophy can function therapeutically. Nietzsche hopes for the emergence of philosophical physicians who could identify the conditions of existence necessary for the health, future, growth, power and life of humanity. "I am still waiting for the philosophical *physician* in the exceptional sense of the term" he remarks "someone who set himself the task of pursuing the problem of the total health of a people, race or of humanity" (GS Pref. 2).

By the late 1880s, then, Nietzsche's diagnosis echoes Hegel's and Schopenhauer's account of Stoicism as a failed attempt to achieve freedom and happiness by withdrawing from or denying reality. Unlike Hegel and Schopenhauer, however, Nietzsche's critique of Stoicism opens onto a new naturalistic standpoint for analyzing and evaluating philosophies as conditions of existence. Nietzsche does not abandon the classical idea of philosophical therapy. Rather he conceives his critique of Stoicism as a step towards a new, post-classical philosophical therapy (Ure and Ryan 2014).

## Notes

- 1 *PS* = *Phenomenology of Spirit*, followed by section number and then the pagination of Hegel 1977.
- 2 *LPH* = *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, followed by the pagination of Hegel 1900.
- 3 *WWR* = *World as Will and Representation*, followed by volume number and pagination of Schopenhauer 1966.
- 4 *KGW* = *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, in Nietzsche 1967–. Nietzsche's trio of studies of Diogenes were originally published as "De Laertii Diogenis fontibus," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 23 (1868): 632–53 and 24 (1869): 181–228; "Analecta Laertiana," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 25 (1870): 217–31; and *Beiträge zur Quellenkunde und Kritik des Laertius Diogenes* (Basel: Carl Schultz, 1870).
- 5 Nietzsche's individual works (all in Nietzsche 1967–) are referred to by commonly used abbreviations followed by section number. These include: BGE, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Nietzsche 2003); D, *Daybreak*

- (Nietzsche 1997); GS, *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche 2001); HH, *Human All Too Human*; AOM, *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*; WS, *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (all in Nietzsche 1996).
- 6 Nietzsche seems to gloss Seneca, *Ep.* 9.18–19.
  - 7 Shklar 1998 uses the term “politics of fear” to conceptualize modern liberalism as a political order that aims to eliminate unavoidable fear and cruelty.
  - 8 In an unpublished note Nietzsche criticizes Stoicism on the grounds that it fails to understand the value of suffering: “I am very antipathetic to this line of thought. Stoicism undervalues the value of pain (it is as useful and necessary as pleasure), the value of stimulation and suffering. It is finally compelled to say: *everything that happens is acceptable to me; nothing is to be different.* [...] All of this is expressed in religious terms as a complete acceptance of God’s actions (for example, Epictetus)” (KGW V 2: 551).

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## 21

# STOICISM AND ROMANTIC LITERATURE

*Simon Swift*

Is there an abode of God if not earth and sea and air and heaven and virtue?  
Why do we seek the gods beyond? Whatever you see, by whatever you are  
stirred, is Jupiter.

*Lucan, Pharsalia*

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.

*William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey"*

English literature of the Romantic period offers remarkably widespread and sophisticated, albeit often submerged and coded, engagements with Stoicism. Such engagements were mediated by the English Romantics' reading in eighteenth-century moral philosophy, and also determined their reception, particularly Wordsworth's, in the Victorian period and beyond. For a philosophically minded Christian Romantic such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge the agency of Stoicism needed to be acknowledged in the ongoing, morally debilitating effects of the Enlightenment's (indeed, the "radical Enlightenment's") materialism and atheism. Relatedly, Stoicism played a role in English political radicalism in the period, and especially in the various responses of English Romantic authors in the 1790s and beyond to the French Revolution. The influence is, of course, not confined to Britain – although the account here will be centered on the British scene. A keen (if unsystematic and plagiarizing) reader of

German idealism, Coleridge noted the role played by Stoicism in the philosophy of his German contemporaries Kant and Fichte (Coleridge 1983: I 159; see Hamilton 2007: 17–18). He also bemoaned what he understood to be a Stoic-inflected pantheism in the poetry of his friend William Wordsworth, in passages such as the epigraph from “Tintern Abbey”. Yet Coleridge also hoped, from about 1798 onward, that Wordsworth would prove capable of writing a long “philosophical poem” that would give new direction to those who, disappointed by the failure of the French Revolution, were sinking into what he described as “an almost epicurean selfishness, disguising the same under the soft titles of domestic attachment and contempt for visionary *philosophes*” (Coleridge 1956: 527). As critics are increasingly acknowledging, the “philosophical poem” that Wordsworth published in 1814 in response to Coleridge’s urging, *The Excursion*, is crucially marked by the ancient schools, especially Stoicism, both in form and content – something that Wordsworth’s most acute contemporary readers had already detected.

This discussion will proceed by describing the ways in which the Romantics drew on their eighteenth-century precursors in their political, literary, religious and philosophical engagements with Stoicism. It will argue that the relation between Stoicism and Romantic literature needs to be understood in the context of the development of ideas of the sympathetic imagination in moral philosophy, and of the contemporaneous rise of “literature” as a distinctive form of “imaginative writing” (Williams 1976: 186). More specifically, it will seek to read the influence of Stoicism on Romantic literature in the context of a concern for “character” that the new literary and philosophical writing shared. Across the eighteenth century, moral philosophers castigated the hard-heartedness of Stoicism as often as they defended its usefulness for ideas and practices of benevolence and sympathy. Describing moral prejudices associated with ancient philosophy, David Hume, for instance, accused Stoicism’s “grave Philosophic endeavour after Perfection” of striking “at all the most endearing Sentiments of the Heart” (Hume 1904: 573). Yet the broadly “literary” or imaginative appropriations of Stoicism found in Hume and others, as well as the uses made of Stoicism in the evolution of the idea of moral sense in Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, also opened up ways of thinking about Stoic doctrine that enabled the development of new ethical systems by key Romantic Stoics such as Wordsworth. Having plotted out this context, I will then go on to examine the ways in which attention to this moral-philosophical legacy enables a clearer view of the role played by Stoicism in English radical and reactionary discourse around the French Revolution. The so-called “English Jacobins” were sometimes seen, by their enemies, as advertising the “hard-heartedness” and lack of domestic affection and patriotism that troubled earlier moral philosophers such as Hume in Stoic doctrine, while radicals such as John Thelwall defended their position in markedly Stoic, cosmopolitan terms. We will then focus on Wordsworth and Coleridge, where many of these cultural tensions are played out in fascinating ways. Through focusing on the example of this well-connected and influential pair, the aim here will also be to draw attention to the engagements of other contemporary writers with the Stoics, while remaining mindful of the ways in which Romantic literature plays a significant role in mediating the reception of Stoicism in modernity.

### **Eighteenth-century legacies: the rise of “literature”**

Making sense of the impact of Stoicism on Romantic literature requires some brief prior attention, then, to its role in eighteenth-century moral philosophy and the ways in which this is translated into Romantic period writing. Over the last twenty years, the importance of Stoicism for the Earl of Shaftesbury, as well as the importance of Shaftesbury for

Wordsworth's development, have both received significant discussion. The Stoics offered Shaftesbury fertile ground for the kind of ethical training that he found to be lacking in the materialist and nominalist currents of seventeenth-century political thought. For Lawrence Klein, "Shaftesbury read the Roman stoics as guides to the practice of self-formation – technicians of the moral and cognitive personality" (Klein 1994: 82). Such ethical training drew on the Stoic conception of a providential harmony between part and whole in nature in order to forward realist arguments about virtue supported by the apprehension of natural beauty. Shaftesbury also revived the ancient idea of the *sensus communis* against what he saw as the egoistic, Epicurean demystifiers of the seventeenth century, especially Hobbes and Rochester (Boyson 2012: 25–39). Against such philosophers, Shaftesbury claimed in the *Characteristics* (1711) that virtue "is really something in itself and in the nature of things," something which even the "supreme will" is governed by and uniform with (Shaftesbury 1999: 266–7). His claims for a "universally active principle" (Shaftesbury 1999: 306) were widely influential throughout Europe, especially on a key source for English Romanticism, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau drew extensively on Seneca as well as Shaftesbury, especially in his treatise on education *Émile* (1762). Wordsworth, in turn, described Shaftesbury in 1815 as "an author at present unjustly depreciated" (Wordsworth 1974: 72) and was fundamentally influenced in the project to write a "philosophical poem" by Shaftesbury's revival of the *sensus communis* and by his thinking about cosmological order – as well as his conception of philosophizing as a dialogic activity (see Boyson 2012; Potkay 2012). He wrote a verse fragment in 1798 entitled "There is an active principle alive in all things," and later used it as a centerpiece of his long poem, *The Excursion*. Wordsworth's conception of cosmological order and harmony found in an active universe, and the linkage between this and virtue, derives from Shaftesbury.

Stoicism occupies a more unstable position in Adam Smith's thought. Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) works by tempering an undeniably selfish, egoistic human nature with certain principles also discernible in human nature that, as Smith writes in his opening sentence, work by interesting man in the fate of others and making their happiness necessary to him, "though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it" (Smith 2002: 11). If a concern for the well-being of others in Smith's account remains fundamentally "selfish," since it points towards man's desire to take pleasure in the sight of others' happiness, the unavoidably active social role played by the imagination in Smith's theory also makes him critical of the Stoic idea of *apatheia*. "The stoical apathy," he writes, is "never agreeable, and all the metaphysical sophisms by which it is supported can seldom serve any other purpose than to blow up the hard insensibility of a coxcomb to ten times its native impertinence" (Smith 2002: 164–5). If civil society is defined by the evolution of moral sentiment, this makes Stoicism at first seem more proximate to the capacity for endurance of pain and consequent indifference to the suffering of others encountered in "primitives" (and indeed, the link between Stoic philosophers, native Americans and African princes was frequently made in the period's literature, as well as by philosophers such as Adam Ferguson). But Smith's position towards Stoicism, and to the classical republican tradition, was complex. As numerous commentators have noticed, both in the *Theory* and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Smith's argument tends to a view that self-interest is conformable with virtue, such that "commerce actually engenders autonomy in the classical sense" (Adelman 2011: 26). In later revisions to the *Theory*, Smith certainly comes to value the Stoic emphasis on "the propriety of [man's] active exertions" over what he sees as the Epicurean's search for happiness "merely in the agreeableness of his passive sensations" (Smith 2002: 354).

Wordsworth's relation to Enlightenment thought, and especially to the Scottish Enlightenment project of formulating a "science of man," in which Smith was such an influential

figure, has been extensively studied (Bewell 1989). Wordsworth certainly had little time for Smith's ideas, describing him in 1815 as "the worst critic, David Hume excepted, that Scotland, a soil to which this species of weed seems natural, has produced" (Wordsworth 1974: 71). By one account Wordsworth's poetry of the 1790s is largely animated by hostility to Smith's theory of sympathetic identification (Simpson 2009). Yet Wordsworth's attack on Smith also takes account of a newly emergent form of writing, "criticism," that is also key to understanding the impact of Stoicism on Wordsworth himself. In the surviving notes for his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, given in the early 1760s, Smith, along with Hugh Blair, was a key figure in the emergence of an idea of "literature" understood as the best exhibition and instructor of moral sentiment, as well as a new notion of criticism – and here Stoicism plays a complex oppositional role. For those who want to understand the "refinements and delicacies of love and friendship," Smith argues in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, poets and romance writers such as Racine, Richardson, Marivaux and Voltaire are "much better instructors than Zeno, Chrysippus or Epictetus" (Smith 2002: 165). But Smith also ventriloquizes Stoic and other philosophical positions throughout his text, making them objects of literary knowledge or character "types" in ways that were influential on later thinking both about Stoic doctrine and ethical action. Knud Haakonssen writes that, "somewhat like a novelist, [Smith] presents a wide variety of moral characters who often judge each other but are rarely judged by the author, except in his capacity as a representative of 'common opinion'" (Smith 2002: viii). So too, Stoicism was disseminated in the eighteenth century through literary sources themselves, such as Addison's *Cato* (1713). The new ethical theory of moral sentiment meant a focus on "character" and especially the moral characteristics of virtue and humanity in place of what are increasingly seen, by Smith and Hume, as the hard, abstract indifference to the complexity of real human lives and sentiments in systems of thought such as Stoicism. Yet in the process of describing it in this way, the Stoic philosophy becomes a character position of its own in their accounts.

The importance of a "poetics of character" to the moral philosophy of the eighteenth century, and its impact on Romantic writing, is currently gaining increasing scholarly attention. Susan Manning recently argued that "character was at the nexus of Enlightenment epistemology, ethics, pedagogy and understanding of social relations" (Manning 2013: 4). In light of Hume's skepticism, including around personal identity, the revival and reconditioning of ancient ideas of *ethos* and *pathos* and ancient notions of character formed a key aspect of new conceptions of knowledge which, as Manning argues, were based on modes of analogy, similitude and propriety rather than metaphysical principle, and which depended on sociable forms of understanding organized around the idea of "correspondence" – what Manning calls "knowledge generated in a specifically dialogic rather than a scholastic framework, by comparing, bringing together" (Manning 2013: 14). While such a conception of knowledge is arguably influenced by ancient ideas of dialogue and its therapeutic effects, it also influenced understanding of the ancient schools themselves and of ancient ethics to the extent that these, too, were reimagined as character positions. Hume sought to describe the position of "the Stoic," "the Epicurean," "the Platonist" and "the Sceptic" in his *Essays, Moral and Political* of 1742, "not so much to explain accurately the ancient sects of philosophy, as to deliver the sentiments of sects that naturally form themselves in the world, and entertain different ideas of human life and happiness" (Hume 1904: 139). This naturalization of the Stoic position is matched by Diderot's much more sympathetic account of it in his *Encyclopédie* article on Stoicism, which describes it as "une affaire de tempérament" rather than a body of doctrine (Diderot 1875–77: 208). In light of these claims, Samuel Baker has recently argued that Stoicism, ancient and modern, "named not so much a coherent philosophical position as a

literary practice.” So too, he goes on, this practice “sought to manage feeling, often through reading and writing, so as to bring the self into accord with the world” (Baker 2009: 445). The possibilities for a “literary” reimagining of Stoicism that eighteenth-century moral philosophy offered to Romanticism were later richly exploited by Wordsworth, as we will see.

Stoic ideas of self-cultivation and an art of living perhaps describe its appeal to literary writers. Baker quotes the most popular British novelist of the Romantic period, Sir Walter Scott, who wrote in his journal that Stoicism is “the only philosophy I know or can practise” (Baker 2009: 452). Baker traces a dialogue with Stoic themes throughout Scott’s *Waverley* novels, especially in *Guy Mannering* (1815), and notes the Stoic resonances of William Hazlitt’s description of Scott as “born for the universe” in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825). There are politics as well as pathos in Hazlitt’s claim; if Scott was “born for the universe,” he also “Narrow’d his mind, / And to party gave up what was meant for mankind” (Hazlitt 1991: 111). The whole is a quotation from Oliver Goldsmith’s mock epitaph for Burke, “Retaliation” (1776). The Stoic, cosmological viewpoint is here imagined, by Hazlitt, to have been surrendered to the narrowness of party interest in Burke and Scott. Burke had been a key figure in the “Revolution controversy” and, as we will see below, drew on Roman writing, including Stoicism, to attack the French Revolution.

Other critics have recently drawn attention to the appeal of Stoicism to other Romantic period literary writers such as Anna Barbauld and Mary Shelley (Vargo 2005). While the appeal of Stoicism is undoubtedly a product of the transformations in philosophical understanding wrought by eighteenth-century moral and social philosophy, and especially the turn towards literature for ethical understanding, it needs also to be framed, particularly as we turn towards writers in the early nineteenth century, as part of the wider cultural appeal of neoclassicism. Especially for thinkers and writers who understand themselves as “liberal,” the classics seemed to offer a way beyond the impasse between the dogmas of orthodox Christianity and the skeptical bent of Enlightenment materialism. This is perhaps the source of the appeal of Neoplatonic ideas of the soul both to Wordsworth and to younger admirers such as John Keats after the turn of the century. The revival of Neoplatonism and the “Plato enthusiasm” in Germany and Britain from the 1790s onward may have seemed to offer a new, less skeptical way of thinking about immortality, which also took account of Enlightenment critiques of religious superstition, and that was or seemed reconcilable to scientific discoveries about “life” (see Chandler 1998: 409–17).<sup>1</sup> Yet the classics were also invoked by radicals who wanted to draw attention to the greater political freedom enjoyed by ancient authors to question or even to deny the immortality of the soul. According to Leigh Hunt, writing in *The Examiner* in 1817, Epicurus “taught his Atheism, or rather his denial of creation and providence, without the least political molestation” while Cicero “was suffered to doubt and to dogmatize alternately, just as he pleased” (Hunt 1817: 259). In this they fared far better than contemporary Englishmen, whose government disallowed the necessary perfect freedom in speculation enjoyed by the ancients.

As Hunt’s claims abundantly prove, radical discourse found itself defending versions of ancient philosophy that were heavily determined by a politically polemical context, and which may therefore have manipulated or simplified ancient doctrine in order to serve the intended intervention. This is, however, another way in which the Romantic period inherits its uses of ancient philosophy from the eighteenth century, since the French Enlightenment in particular had already registered motivated attacks and defenses of figures such as Seneca and Epicurus which had more to do with contemporary scientific and religious debate than with ancient doctrine itself. This is emphatically not the case for Wordsworth, who, as we will see, was a close reader of Stoic originals, even as he made the approach to the Stoic



“character” of earlier moral philosophy a *modus operandi* for *The Excursion*. Even so, the proximity of the ethical system developed there to Roman Stoicism opened once again Enlightenment-era polemics around pantheism and the cultural fear of the Spinozistic radical Enlightenment (Swift 2013; Levinson 2007).

### Revolution and radicalism

The men who were brought by events to the head of our revolution were, by a necessary consequence of the education they had received, steeped in ancient views which are no longer valid, which the philosophers whom I mentioned above [Rousseau, the abbé de Mably] had made fashionable.

Benjamin Constant, “*The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns*” (1819, in Constant 1988)

Constant’s claim about the untimeliness of the Revolutionaries’ fashionable ideas was anticipated by the most controversial English respondent to the Revolution, Edmund Burke. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) – a text which draws on a range of ancient and especially Roman sources (see Sachs 2010: 52–65) – Burke is at pains to warn about the dangers of the effort under way in France to establish a constitution on what he calls “metaphysical” grounds – that is, to design a new state based on “theory” or political principle as opposed to custom and inherited wisdom. Burke understood this theoretical exercise as an embarrassing aping of the ancients. He refers in the *Reflections* to Cicero’s *Paradoxes of the Stoics* and Horace’s *Epistles* in order to expose to ridicule the desire of the French Revolutionaries to form a constitution on philosophical first principles. Cicero, writes Burke,

ludicrously describes Cato as endeavouring to act, in the commonwealth, upon the school paradoxes, which exercised the wits of the junior students in the Stoic philosophy. If this was true of Cato, these gentlemen copy after him in the manner of some persons who lived about this time – *pede nudo Catonem*.

(Burke 2003: 145)

The fool who thinks he can attain Cato’s genius simply by walking barefoot like him (or, in the source in Horace, the fool who thinks he can become a great poet simply by drinking wine) reappears in the fake classical costume of contemporary Paris. To live by paradox, for Burke, is always a dangerous sign of foolishness. Whereas the paradoxes of the “original authors” were exercised “as means of cultivating their taste and improving their style,” the paradoxes of contemporary writers, and especially Rousseau, “brought forth purely as a sport of fancy, to try their talents, to rouse attention and excite surprise” are misread in Paris as “serious grounds of action, upon which they proceed in regulating the most important concerns of the state” (Burke 2003: 145). Rousseau’s effort was to rouse a disaffected and complacent public with his shocking call to a Spartan civil existence – in this he is influenced by Shaftesbury’s uses of paradox in the *Characteristics*, as a way of activating virtue through dialogic thought experiment that shows itself continually disinclined to “take party” (Shaftesbury 1999: 234). But according to Burke, Rousseauian paradox had been realized, in Paris, in a way never intended by its original author, and with violent consequences. Burke writes of “the prevalent opinion in Paris, that an unfeeling heart, and an undoubting confidence, are the sole qualifications for a perfect legislator” (Burke 2003: 143), picking up on the cultural worry about Stoic hard-heartedness found in Smith and Hume, and that is repeated elsewhere in anti-radical polemic.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's turn away from radicalism in the mid-1790s saw him work with an opposition between Christian and Stoic ethics. One of his *Lectures on Revealed Religion*, delivered in Bristol in May 1795, draws a contrast between ancient philosophy and Christian principles of action as embodied in Christ's character. Coleridge explains his decision to dwell in his lecture on "Christ's character and doctrine because the Stoical Morality which disclaims all the duties of Gratitude and domestic Affection has been lately revived in a book popular among the professed Friends of civil Freedom" (Coleridge 1971: 164). If Christ's character, for Coleridge, is typified by filial affection, humility, self-abasement (and even at one point patriotism), the Stoic's hyper-confidence sees him abjure all personal ties and domestic attachments. The Stoics, for Coleridge, were totally regardless of all domestic affections. They held it right to abstain from vice "not because their fellow Creatures would be injured, but because Vice was beneath them" (Coleridge 1971: 157). Christ's character, in contrast, delivers what Coleridge describes as a "system of morality" which he thinks "superior to the ethics of any single Philosopher of antiquity" (Coleridge 1971: 160). Such a comparison with the ancient schools, favorable to Christianity, is also found in other writers in the 1790s associated with the radical cause, for example Joseph Priestley. The superiority of Christianity for Coleridge also consists in its being delivered to "the multitude", whom Coleridge, drawing on Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, thinks were despised by the ancient philosophers.

Building on the work of moral philosophers, Coleridge Christianizes a view of character as a sentimental but also ethical unity that is able to trump the hard-heartedness of ancient philosophical systems. But he was also at pains, in later writings, to distinguish Stoicism from Christianity. In an aphorism from his *Aids to Reflection* (1825) entitled "The Christian No Stoic," Coleridge writes:

Of the sects of ancient philosophy the Stoic is, perhaps, the nearest to Christianity. Yet even to this sect Christianity is fundamentally opposite. For the Stoic attaches the highest honor (or rather, attaches honor *solely*) to the person that acts virtuously in spite of his feelings, or who has raised himself above the conflict by their extinction; while Christianity instructs us to place small reliance on a Virtue that does not *begin* by bringing the Feelings to a conformity with the commands of Conscience.

(Coleridge 1993: 96)

If Stoicism (unlike Epicurean materialism) shares with Christianity a commitment to a providential harmony in creation, and if it shares a referral of human suffering to a higher order, this is all the more reason to draw a sharp dividing line between them. Religion, Coleridge claims in the same aphorism, "doth not destroy the life of nature, but adds to it a life more excellent" (Coleridge 1993: 95–6). Elsewhere in the *Aids to Reflection* Coleridge argues that the Stoic's "high, comprehensive and *notional*" sense of virtue should be abandoned "as a relic of Paganism," to "modern Pagans" such as Shaftesbury, while Christians should restore it to "its original import, viz. Manhood or Manliness," and use it "exclusively to express the quality of Fortitude; Strength of Character in relation to the resistance opposed by Nature and the irrational Passions to the Dictates of Reason" (Coleridge 1993: 195).

The re-emergence in the period's radical discourse, however, of the concept of "rights of nature" opened the path to support from Stoic ideas of living according to nature. Both Burke and Coleridge are troubled by the sharp divide that they see in radical discourse between domestic affection and the feeling for humanity. It is almost as if radicals need to advertise, in Coleridge's account, a cruel indifference to their local attachments in order to

motivate their going out to a cosmopolitan, rational perspective. Against this claim, Coleridge insists that, from a Christian view, “[t]he intensity of private attachments encourages, not prevents, universal philanthropy” (Coleridge 1971: 163). Domestic attachment had also formed a fundamental principle of Burke’s defense of the British constitution against the abstract ideas of the metaphysicians and theorists in Paris, in that the British had “given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties” (Burke 2003: 29–30).

The text that Coleridge refers to in which the “Stoical morality” had, he alleges, been recently revived is William Godwin’s *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, which was read widely in radical circles after its publication in 1793. As Jonathan Sachs has argued, examples of Roman heroism are crucial to Godwin in his effort to prove the existence of disinterested, universal benevolence – to show, as Godwin argues by quoting Hutcheson in his “Account of the Seminary” from 1783, that “self-love is not the source of all our passions, but that disinterested benevolence has its seat in the human heart” (Godwin 1993: 20). His effort to substantiate this claim gives a Stoic tenor reminiscent of Marcus Aurelius to Godwin’s general principle as it is articulated in *Political Justice*:

The man who vigilantly conforms his affections to the standard of justice, who loses the view of personal regards in the greater objects that engross his attention [...] has an uncommonly exquisite source of happiness [...] He is filled with harmony within; and the state of his thoughts is uncommonly favourable to what we may venture to style the sublime emotions of tranquillity.

(Godwin 1976: 383)

Godwin takes Smith’s idea of the sympathetic imagination to a radically disinterested extreme. The fact that we are “able in imagination to go out of ourselves, and become impartial spectators of the system of which we are a part” (Godwin 1976: 381) should lead us, according to Godwin, to use our power of reason to recognize that our ties to those parts of the system which are most proximate to us are founded in a prejudice for the familiar and the known. Instead, our benevolent actions should be determined by a strict principle of rational utility; it is “the consideration of my neighbour’s moral worth, and his importance to the general weal,” Godwin writes earlier on in the *Enquiry*, that forms “the only standard to determine the treatment to which he is entitled” (Godwin 1976: 171).

Coleridge seems right in his claim that gratitude is dispensed with by Godwin – although, not unlike Coleridge himself, Godwin thought that the same virtues of truthfulness, sincerity and equality of consideration would promote a good family life and the good of the wider community (see Jones 1993: 98). A benefactor ought to be esteemed, Godwin claims, “not because he bestowed a benefit upon me, but because he bestowed it upon a human being. His desert will be in exact proportion to the degree in which that human being was worthy of the distinction conferred” (Godwin 1976: 171). Operating this turn away from gratitude is a utopian horizon of the other’s absolute transparency, the ready availability of their actions to a rational judgment of those actions’ worth and utility, which underpins Godwin’s system. It is Godwin’s confidence that a rational judgment of the worth of the actions of others can be made and acted upon that troubled his most sensitive readers.

In the mid-1790s, after losing faith in violent revolution, Wordsworth had read and briefly committed to Godwin’s principles of political justice before he had, as he writes in his autobiographical poem *The Prelude*, “yielded up moral questions in despair” (Wordsworth 1979: 406). Some of Wordsworth’s most important and influential poetry was written in the

late 1790s, soon after he renounced Godwinian rationalism. The poems written in that period are conspicuous for the way in which they stage encounters with others who are, in a sense, unreadable, and certainly not susceptible to the kind of intrusively calculating judgment of the “exact proportion” between esteem and the “worth” of actions that underwrites Godwin’s abandonment of an ethics based upon gratitude and personal connection. Indeed, Wordsworth appears to go out of his way in poems such as “The Ruine Cottage,” first written in 1797–98, to stage a kind of unease or discomfort with this abandonment. A travelling pedlar who regularly visits a mother of two small children whose husband has enlisted in the army after an economic collapse and ill-health have made their life as independent weavers untenable is conspicuously ungrateful for the hospitality he receives in her home. At one point the Pedlar offers her words of hope for the return of her husband; but “for my hope,” he recounts, “it seemed she did not thank me.” At another, it is he who takes hope from her – out, almost, of her mouth, like a child bewitched by her story – “glad to take / Such words of hope from her own mouth as / Served to cheer us both” (Wordsworth 2007: 72, 68).

This poem seems to play with, and to make conspicuous and uncomfortable, the radical abandonment of gratitude and domestic affection outlined by Coleridge in Godwin. Yet it also seems to warn about the dangers of sympathy and domestic affection tipping over into a kind of cannibalistic feeding on the suffering of others. It describes the ways in which we become attached to particular individuals who may be strangers to us through story, and the struggle we have in letting go even of these unfamiliar, narrated lives or character sketches in the name of abstract principles such as “humanity.” To this extent, it perhaps meditates on the difficulties of achieving Stoic *apatheia* when faced with the reality of human suffering. Nevertheless, the moving-on from sorrow and individual loss that the poem records, as well as its overall commitment to productive action, have led one recent commentator to describe it as an example of a kind of “Georgic Stoicism” (Fairer 2009: 260).

In 1796 John Thelwall gave a series of lectures on Roman history, first in London, later in the provinces, that attracted provincial audiences numbering sometimes 5,000 (Sachs 2010: 49). The subject of Roman history gave Thelwall, or so he hoped, the latitude needed to discuss political freedom and tyranny without risk of arrest and possible deportation or even execution for treason, under increasingly draconian conditions of censorship brought about by Pitt’s Treason and Seditious Meetings Acts of late 1795. The texts of the lectures were not published, and so we do not know whether Thelwall discussed the Stoics at all (although it would seem unlikely), but the influence of Stoic ethics is evident one year earlier, in a series of political lectures delivered at the Beaufort Buildings in London. These endorse and radicalize Godwin’s attack on gratitude, and develop it into a further attack on the perceived weakness of sorrow and regret. Gratitude, or the “return of benefits” (Thelwall 1795: 230) writes Thelwall, “has a tendency to draw the human mind from the consideration of the whole and to fix it, from a principle of self-love, upon a few individuals” (Thelwall 1795: 227). Like Godwin, Thelwall appeals to a principle of rational calculation in order to argue for universal, indifferent sympathy. Justice commands us, “without favour or regard to personal feelings, to cultivate felicity in every bosom capable of receiving its impression, and remove sorrow and affliction from every sentient being, wherever the opportunity is presented” (Thelwall 1795: 229–30). Benefit should only, consequently, be offered according to “the capacity and the inclination of [an] individual to do good in his turn to other human beings whom it may be in his power afterwards to serve” (Thelwall 1795: 230).

Thelwall highlights the role of memory both in acts of revenge and gratitude. The vengeful or grateful man, he writes, “act from the same selfish spring of motion, that is to say, the recollection of the benefits or injuries heaped upon himself, and the hatred or love he feels

towards the individuals” (Thelwall 1795: 232). Thelwall’s strategy is instead to draw attention to wider forms of historical remembrance, especially the politically motivated remembering of republican, and the forgetting or repression of loyalist, atrocities in France. The question of a vengeful focus on the past also offers Thelwall a kind of yardstick with which to measure and ultimately to justify the virtue of armed resistance. The French, he concedes, were animated by a spirit of revenge, but only because the aristocracy had “taught the people to be cruel, by convincing them they had nothing but cruelty, nothing but tyranny to expect” (Thelwall 1795: 254). This accounts for some of the republican atrocities of the Revolution, which Thelwall in his lectures was on the way to justifying or at least excusing in part.

Gratitude, for Thelwall, is guilty of fettering great and noble minds that were “born for the universe” (Thelwall 1795: 235) to local attachments and, as he argues in a proto-Nietzschean way, to the tyranny of remembering. Although more immediate sources for Thelwall’s and Godwin’s views might be found in the writings of Ferguson, for example, who celebrates the lack of gratitude found among native Americans in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767, in Godwin 1993), or even in Hutcheson (see Jones 1993: 92), the opposition between the virtues of firmness, equality and freedom and the mores of contemporary civil society give their arguments a Stoic tenor. Thelwall also recognizes, in a way strikingly reminiscent of Seneca, the similar structure that animates gratitude and revenge, making compassion an unstable support for justice and, as Martha Nussbaum puts it, “cruelty’s first cousin” (Nussbaum 2001: 362). If anti-Stoics such as Coleridge accuse radicals such as Godwin of being animated by a Stoic disregard for domestic affection and local ties, and imply that this leads them into a celebration of cruelty, in fact it is important to notice how these radicals appear to be confluent with Stoic emotion theory’s awareness of the way that a structure of cruelty runs through compassion. Both, according to Nussbaum, are consequences of the individual’s questionable acknowledgement of the importance of worldly goods or other persons to their flourishing, leaving the individual vulnerable to the vagaries of fortune. This is not Thelwall’s point; but it is notable that he arrives at a similar insight into the structure of compassion as the Stoics. Writing his “philosophical poem” in the wake of the Revolution, it fell to Wordsworth, an old friend of Thelwall, to excavate the Stoic genealogy of the risks of attachment to fortune – and to invert the radical argument by making excessive attachment to Revolutionary hope itself into one of the causes of political unhappiness in the early nineteenth century.

### Wordsworth and Coleridge

[...] a great Poet ought [...] to rectify men’s feelings, to give them new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane, pure, and permanent, in short, more consonant to nature, that is, to eternal nature, and the great moving spirit of things.

*Wordsworth (to John Wilson, 7 June 1802)*

“What did Wordsworth think he was doing in his writings of the first decade of the nineteenth century?” asks Adam Potkay in a recent study. “A short answer would be: better conforming himself to stoicism, specifically to the civic-minded Roman stoicism of Cicero and Seneca and their modern heir, Shaftesbury” (Potkay 2012: 149). The influence of Stoicism on Wordsworth’s poetry and prose has long been acknowledged. In a chapter-length study of that relation in her book *Wordsworth’s Reading of Roman Prose* (1946), a chapter which acknowledges numerous prior studies of the impact of Stoicism on Wordsworth, Jane

Worthington argued that a study of Wordsworth's poems composed between 1804 and 1814 "reveals a wealth of pure Stoic philosophy in language frankly reminiscent of the Latin writers" (Worthington 1946: 45). At one point in his notes for *The Excursion*, Worthington shows, Wordsworth is able to identify two lines of a quotation from the Elizabethan poet Samuel Daniel incorporated into the poem as themselves a quotation from Seneca's *Quaestiones naturales*. As far as we know, Wordsworth was the first to identify Daniel's translation of Seneca, suggesting that his knowledge of the Roman Stoic "was as wide as it was thorough" (Worthington 1946: 45), not least since Seneca's text was much less well-known than the *Epistles* or the *Dialogues*.

Coleridge, as we saw earlier, had urged Wordsworth on to the writing of a poem that would give new hope to those who, as a result of the failure of the French Revolution, were descending into "an almost epicurean selfishness, disguising the same under the soft titles of domestic attachment and contempt for visionary *philosophes*." *The Excursion* features a character who stands for exactly the kind of position Coleridge has in mind; a dejected "Solitary" living in rural retirement after the death of his family and the failure of the French Revolution have led him to give up on all hopes of amelioration. He is ripe for Stoic questioning of his dependence on external goods and fortune – and a clear example of how it leads to unhappiness. He is also associated with "epicurean selfishness," and specifically the cultivating of one's garden, early on in the poem through his reading of Voltaire's satire on Enlightenment optimism, *Candide*. Wordsworth had earlier, in 1799, arrived at the climax of the first version of his "poem to Coleridge," which later became an intended prelude (indeed, *The Prelude*) to the philosophical poem with a passage that echoes Coleridge's urging:

If, mid indifference and apathy  
And wicked exultation, when good men  
On every side fall off we know not how  
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names  
Of peace and quiet and domestic love–  
Yet mingled, not unwillingly, with sneers  
On visionary minds – if, in this time  
Of dereliction and dismay, I yet  
Despair not of our nature, but retain  
A more than Roman confidence, a faith  
That fails not, in all sorrow my support,  
The blessing of my life, the gift is yours  
O mountains, thine, O Nature.

(Wordsworth 1979: 26)

The passage is remarkable for the way that it weaves its way around politically and philosophically loaded terms – including its invocation of Hellenic emotion theory in "indifference and apathy" – in order to blend Christian and Stoic models and to stake a claim for a "more than Roman confidence," a kind of hyper-Stoic position, as Coleridge might say, in nature.

Coleridge's point had always been that domestic love, under the rubric of a Christian philosophy, was reconcilable to visionary philosophy, but that a reactionary defense of the domestic could also be a disguise for the "selfishness" of epicurean retirement. "Selfishness," too, is a term that finds its way to Coleridge and Wordsworth through a century of debate about the relation between egoism and benevolence in human nature via intermediaries such as Adam Smith, and influenced by ancient ethics.

The effort of *The Excursion* is to cheer up the dejected Solitary, to persuade him to recognize his participation in a providential order, a "design not wholly worn away" (Wordsworth 2007: 107), chiefly through the Pedlar who had first visited the weaver woman in Book 1, now known as "the Wanderer." He is the poem's chief mouthpiece for a view of independence, and a faith in providence, virtue and the active powers of the universe that is conformable to Stoicism. Yet, as a number of commentators have noticed, there is something excessive about the various "harangues" with which he tries to talk the Solitary out of his dejection, something that cannot touch the Solitary's unhappiness. Perhaps the "more than Roman confidence" that the poem wants to develop lies elsewhere, in the fabric of the poetry itself, that is like Stoicism but somehow also more than itself.

Since Wordsworth "recognized a cosmic order," Jane Worthington argues, he could "adopt that portion of Stoic ethics which teaches the value of bringing the individual will into harmony with the general order of things" (Worthington 1946: 46). In a similar vein, Adam Potkay argues that after a series of personal traumas early on in the new century, including the death of two of his children and of his brother John at sea (a set of traumas that suggest there is more of the Solitary and his yearning for repose in Wordsworth than may at first meet the eye), Wordsworth's "subsequent immersion in Roman Stoicism [...] led to his increasing emphasis on the good of independence – from partial attachments, immoderate passions, fortune's wheel, and administered public assistance – coupled with an equally Stoic sense of the interdependence of all things" (Potkay 2012: 11). According to this theory of independence and interdependence, as Potkay develops it, Wordsworth's ethics show individuals to be at one with the universe – and in realizing this, counsels them to tone down their attachments to particular others. Suspicion of the domestic is no longer the impulse of a radical mind "born for the universe," but rather marks a revival of the Stoic response to the problem of inevitable disappointment in human life. This revival is to be developed into an ethics as opposed, perhaps, to a politics.

A Wordsworthian commitment to independence – albeit that the poem asks questions about the capacity of most humans to follow the example of the Wanderer figure as sage – partly contributed to numerous criticisms in the period of Wordsworth's "egotism." This view of his "egotism" or overconfidence was itself tinted by the long tradition in English literature of Christian, anti-Stoic diatribe. In his lecture on revealed religion of 1795 discussed above, Coleridge argued that while the Stoics "believed a God indeed or at least seemed to believe one," it was "a material God, a principle of fire, to which they sometimes attributed Intelligence and sometimes obscurely denied it." They did not think of this God as a first Cause, Coleridge continues, "but [as] the result of the organization of the Universe, in the same way as our minds have been supposed to be the effect of the peculiar organization of our Bodies." Coleridge links this belief to the sin of pride, which he describes as "the most absurd, and to a wise man, the most disgusting of human Vices" (Coleridge 1971: 156–7). In coming to this conclusion, he finds himself in a long tradition of poets who are critical of Stoic pride, stretching from Milton, who has Christ describe "The Stoic lost in philosophic pride / By him call'd virtue" (Milton 1971: 563) in *Paradise Regained*, through to T. S. Eliot, who describes the "stoical attitude" in the early twentieth century as "the reverse of Christian

humility” (Eliot 1927: 9). Apparently drawing on Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s contemporary Hegel, and his association of Stoicism with the unhappy consciousness, Eliot writes that “Stoicism is the refuge for the individual in an indifferent or hostile world too big for him; it is the permanent substratum of a number of versions of cheering oneself up” (Eliot 1927: 9). The whole effort of *The Excursion* could be understood as motivated by an effort to cheer up the dejected solitary; and “cheerfulness” is a keyword for the poem’s first book.

What appears to Eliot as Stoicism’s arrogant disavowal of local attachment, of the key Christian topos of community, can be figured either as excessive pride or as a last refuge of the defeated – or, in Eliot’s own account, as both at the same time. “A man,” writes Eliot, “does not join himself with the Universe so long as he has anything else to join himself with” (Eliot 1927: 9). Reviewing *The Excursion* in 1814, William Hazlitt (whose father, like the young Coleridge in 1795, had been a Unitarian preacher) wrote that in Wordsworth’s poetic vision, “[i]t is as if there were nothing but himself and the universe” (Hazlitt 1930–34: 11). This accounts, for Hazlitt, for the failure of the poem’s form, a dramatic dialogue between four characters drawn out over nine books. Hazlitt argues that Wordsworth’s egotism stops him from being able sympathetically to inhabit different characters, a capacity Hazlitt celebrates elsewhere in that master of dramatic propriety, Shakespeare. What we are left with in *The Excursion* is instead “soliloquies of the same character, taking different views of the subject” (a judgment repeated almost verbatim in Coleridge’s criticism of the poem three years later in his *Biographia Literaria*). Hazlitt compares this dramatic failure to the dialogues of Lucius and Caius in Cicero, which he describes as “impertinent babbling, where there is no dramatic distinction of character” (Hazlitt 1930–34: 11).

Hazlitt’s claim about the failure of characterization in *The Excursion* matters as a link to Stoicism since, as I have earlier suggested, it was as “character” that Stoicism was transmitted to Wordsworth from eighteenth-century moral philosophy, even while the theme of the character of the good Christian, or even the character of Christ himself, was set as a counterexample to the ancient Stoics by Coleridge and others. Recent readers of the poem’s dialogic form have been more sympathetic to its uses of character. Sally Bushell, for example describes the poem’s effort to redefine “‘philosophy’ not as a series of abstract principles, but as the study and development of interaction between human lives” (Bushell 2002: 85), which makes the poem participate in Susan Manning’s “poetics of character.” Such a view of knowledge as a dialogic, shared, communal effort that depends on an awareness of how opinion is always expressed and held contextually, rather than absolutely, draws on a recognizably Shaftesburyian, but also negatively capable, idea of philosophical thinking as polite conversation which refuses, as Shaftesbury has it, “to take party instantly.” It also points towards the poem’s highly self-aware treatment of the ancient schools themselves. In Book 4, one of the poem’s main interlocutors, “the Poet,” takes to task both “The Brotherhood / Of soft Epicureans,” taught “to yield up their souls / To a voluptuous unconcern, / Preferring tranquillity to all things” and “The Power / Who, for the sake of sterner quiet, closed / The Stoic’s heart against the vain approach / Of admiration, and all sense of joy” (Wordsworth 2007: 113–4). But he does so under the pressure of his interlocutor, the Solitary, who has just offered a dismissive description of poetry as “the perpetual warbling that prevails / In Arcady, beneath unaltered skies” (Wordsworth 2007: 113). In writing this kind of dialogue, Wordsworth shows an awareness of the polemic surrounding the reception of the ancient schools in Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment culture. While Wordsworth seems to echo Hume, Smith and Burke’s view of the Stoic as hard-hearted, he also draws attention to the ways in which the Stoic reception is always tintured and shaped by debates that have little to do with actual doctrine. Stoicism and Epicureanism are imagined as “hard” and “soft”



philosophies, here, in response to a philosophical attack on poetry as a kind of utopian, other-worldly warbling that can do nothing to improve human life. In drawing attention to the characterization of the schools in this way, and especially to the polemical context that determines such characterization, Wordsworth opens a space for making more creative and authentic uses of Stoicism.

Wordsworth's poetry of the early nineteenth century is shaped by its relation to ancient philosophy, and especially Seneca. In 1807 Wordsworth had written an "Ode to Duty" which, from 1836 onward, was given as an epigraph a passage from Seneca's epistles on how the virtuous person is trained by habit (*mors*) to the point where he "not only can act rightly, but he cannot help acting rightly" (Potkay 2012: 36). Much of the surviving material for the unfinished project for the "philosophical poem," both *The Excursion* and *The Prelude*, shows the influence of Senecan texts and ideas, especially *De providentia*. *The Prelude* arguably works with Seneca's idea (mediated by Rousseau) of hardening the child's mind through small mishaps through its celebrated theory of the "spots of time," and Wordsworth is clearly drawn to Stoic, providential ideas of preconception. Yet despite this use of Stoicism, purposeful for the cultivation of virtue and belief in natural order, Wordsworth's ideas continued to appear to Coleridge to receive their Stoic tenor through the altogether more questionable and ambivalent channels of the radical Enlightenment. At various points in his later texts, Coleridge returned to his attack on Stoicism and targeted it at his old friend. In his *Biographia Literaria*, for example, he associated the claims of another Wordsworth poem of the early nineteenth century, the "Immortality Ode," with what he took to be the pantheism of Spinoza and Behmen (Coleridge 1983: II 139); later, in his *Opus Maximum* in the early 1820s, he associated the passage quoted as the epigraph to this essay, from "Tintern Abbey" with its celebration of a motion and a spirit rolling through all things, with "the Anima Mundi of the Stoics" and "the unica substantia of Spinoza, that mysterious nothing which alone is," and which for Coleridge is a "Phantom set up in lieu of God" (Coleridge 2002: 112).

## Beyond

If Wordsworth was accused of a Stoic and Spinozan pantheism by his friend, it seems clear that his recourse to the Stoics was in fact a part of his effort to offer a way past the skeptical and materialist tendencies of the Enlightenment and Revolution by turning their critique of domestic affection back onto them. It was part of his search for a manageable way of attaining tranquillity in the face of the sufferings that make up human life, and in the knowledge that they cannot be avoided. But out of this encounter, Wordsworth also began to elaborate an ethical theory that proved attractive to Victorian admirers. The title of Adam Potkay's book, *Wordsworth's Ethics*, which offers the most extensive revival of interest in Wordsworth's engagements with the Stoics among recent readers, is borrowed from the title of a seminal essay by the great Victorian Wordsworthian Leslie Stephen. Matthew Arnold rejected the philosophical interpretation of Wordsworth offered by Stephen, claiming instead that his poetry "is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties" (Potkay 2012: 2). While Potkay associates this joy with the Stoics (contradicting the Poet's interpretation of the Stoic heart closed to all joy in *The Excursion*), Arnold associates Wordsworth with Marcus Aurelius. If worries about the "radical Enlightenment" subsided in the nineteenth century, Eliot's attack on Stoicism at the beginning of the twentieth suggests a continuity with previous Christian worries about the Stoic's perceived rejection of community. This also conditions the modernist hostility to Romantic excess, Irving Babbitt writing in 1919 that while no one

would “question that Wordsworth has passages of great ethical elevation,” “in some of these passages he simply renews the error of the Stoics who also display at times great ethical elevation; he ascribes to the natural order virtues that the natural order does not give” (Babbitt 1919: 286). Romanticism arguably continues to be a key conduit for kinds of radical pantheism that link Spinoza and the Stoics, and arguably serves as a source for modern proponents of such theories such as Gilles Deleuze. But it has been my contention here that making sense of the impact of Stoicism on English Romantic literature, at least, primarily requires a reconstruction of the moral-philosophical contexts and debates that informed discourse around the French Revolution.

### Note

- 1 Erasmus Darwin, author of *Zoonomia* (Darwin 1794), a medical and naturalist treatise much associated with radicalism, uses as an epigraph a passage from *Aeneid* 6 associated with Stoicism: “the heaven and earth [...] a spirit within sustains, and mind, pervading its members, sways the whole mass and mingles with its mighty frame.” See Potkay 2012: 218.

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# STOICISM IN VICTORIAN CULTURE

*Heather Ellis*

Historians of philosophy and of Victorian culture alike have found it hard to agree on a definition of Stoicism which captures the complexity of its cultural reception in nineteenth-century Britain. Should we restrict ourselves to philosophical ideas which identify themselves clearly with the various Greek and Roman Stoic writers, or should we rather concern ourselves with the examination of a wider cultural attitude towards pain, difficulty and the challenges of life? To put it differently, we can confine ourselves to the discussion of Stoicism, with a capital “S,” or broaden out to include “stoicism,” written in lower case. In the words of Gordon Hartford, the term “Stoic” should refer to the “intentional attaining of the goals of the Greek and later Roman philosophy of Stoicism” while with “stoic,” he writes, “we are in a laxer field of meaning, using here a word which has become proverbial in its reach to cover austere steadfastness, a type of uncomplaining endurance” (Hartford 1999: 53).

Even if we were to limit ourselves to a discussion of the impact of Stoic philosophy upon Victorian culture, this would itself be no easy task. For “Stoic philosophy” is itself notoriously difficult to define. As Hartford continues, “The sources of its data are incomplete [...] its origins are unclear and our knowledge of it parlous. The best known collection of Stoic works is called *Fragmenta* and no whole book survives either by the so-called founder of the Stoic school, Zeno, or by its most prolific exponent, Chrysippus” (Hartford 1999: 52). This was a problem with which Victorian scholars, philosophers and critics were to struggle themselves. Richard Graves, a curate and classical scholar, who, with his popular translation of Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations*, published in 1792, did much to introduce many early Victorians to Stoic ideas, complained in his introductory essay entitled “A Slight View” of Stoicism, that “It is very difficult to give a clear and consistent account of the stoical doctrines, as the later disciples of Zeno, their founder, differ widely from the earlier, and most of them from their master” (Graves 1792: ix).

Given these difficulties, it is necessary to exercise considerable caution when ascribing “Stoic” ideals or ideas to anyone. Thus, for example, Hartford strikes an important note of caution in relation to the poetry of Matthew Arnold, who has often been described as the Victorian stoic poet par excellence:

Self-discipline, self-knowledge, self-respect, and self-confidence characterise the Stoic, but they also characterise many who have never heard of Stoicism, or, if they

have, do not choose to embrace it as their guide to conduct. Characteristics such as fortitude, dignity, steadiness, self-reliance, and an unruffled demeanour are so little the monopoly of Stoicism that it is questionable to identify Stoic characteristics behind several lines simply because Arnold showed an interest in Stoicism, more particularly Epictetus and Aurelius. He drew from so many sources in his learning, among them Plato, Goethe, Wordsworth, and Newman, that it is risky to annex “self-schooled, self-scanned [...] self-secure” [quotations from Arnold’s poetry] for Stoicism, given that several of Arnold’s spiritual mentors displayed those characteristics in abundance.

(Hartford 1999: 54)

### **Stoicism in Victorian scholarship**

When we consider the position of Stoicism in Victorian culture, a curious paradox emerges. As we will see, the Stoics, both Greek and Roman, were barely studied at the center of Victorian philosophy, the University of Oxford, or written about by scholars of philosophy. However, as a writer in the *Saturday Review* in 1910 explained, “People who confess to the vaguest understandings of the Platonic doctrines, and to whom Aristotle is little more than an awe-inspiring name, will glibly dilate on the merits of Stoicism or criticise with severely ignorant severity the moral ideas of Epicurus.” By contrast, the same reviewer continued, the “Honours Man” at Oxford or Cambridge devotes but “a couple of hours to getting up these systems” before his final examinations (Anon. 1910: 458).

If we take a closer look at the philosophy taught and written at Oxford, Cambridge and other British universities in the Victorian period, this contrast would seem to be borne out. M. R. Stopper has written that “Ancient philosophy for the Victorians seems to have meant the moral thought of Plato and Aristotle” and this is certainly the case if we focus on the undergraduate curricula at Oxford and Cambridge. “The region beyond the confines of Plato and Aristotle was for undergraduates [...] largely *terra incognita*,” he declares (Stopper 1981: 280–1). Some knowledge of the post-Aristotelians, of Stoic and Epicurean thought, will no doubt have been gained by the literary study of Roman authors influenced by these schools of philosophy such as Lucretius, Cicero and Seneca which occupied much of the four years of an Oxford undergraduate degree in *Literae Humaniores*, or Classics. Evidence for systematic and analytical instruction in the Stoic thinkers is almost non-existent, however. As college tutors retained a high degree of control over what they taught throughout the period, undergraduates frequently experienced highly idiosyncratic reading lists and essay topics. Thus, from a biography of the poet and friend of Matthew Arnold, Arthur Hugh Clough, we know he wrote an essay on “The History and Influence of the Stoical Philosophy” during his time as an undergraduate at Balliol in the late 1830s (Biswas 1972: 75). What cannot be found, however, at Oxford and Cambridge are any regular lectures on the post-Aristotelians, on the Stoics, Epicureans, Skeptics or Neoplatonists. Major works of scholarship on the Greek and Roman Stoics are also very thin on the ground before the end of the Victorian era.

### **Stoicism and Christianity**

What work was carried out on the Stoics in the Victorian period tended to be focused on the relationship of Stoic thought to developments within contemporary Christianity. Such, for example, were the Donellan lectures on “Stoicism and Christianity” which were given by Rev. Thomas Jordan at Trinity College Dublin in the academic year 1879/80. Rather than

being an exposition or interpretation of Stoic thinking per se, Jordan rather targeted his lectures against those he believed were using the example of the Roman Stoics to erode the integrity of religious education at the national level. “An earnest endeavour has been made,” complained Jordan (1884: x) “to render [Stoicism ...] as widely useful as possible, by treating it as a branch of Christian evidence.”

As this comment suggests, philosophical work on the great Stoic thinkers in the Victorian period should not be seen as driving a wider enthusiasm for Stoicism, but rather as responding to interest shown in its ideas from other sections of society, above all, from those keen to promote a liberalization of religion. The suffragette, Edith Gray Wheelwright, writing in the *Westminster Review* in 1911 summed up the influence of Stoic ideas in the Victorian period as follows: “The philosophical and ethical content of Stoicism has become an integral part of modern – even of Christian – thought; [it] has enriched the poet and inspired the philosopher.” Significantly she links a renewed emphasis upon Stoicism among religious thinkers and writers to a defining characteristic of the nineteenth century in Britain: the broadening and relaxing of religious creeds and identities. “The spirit of the age,” she declared, “is favourable to a large and reasonable synthesis of all existing creeds; while it is also increasingly felt that no religion nor philosophy is ever entirely isolated” (Wheelwright 1911: 320).

What must be emphasized here, however, when looking at the complex interconnections between a revival of interest in Stoic doctrines and those eager to push for a relaxation of traditional religious beliefs and practices in Victorian Britain, is that the number of Stoic thinkers and texts which were being drawn on was extremely limited. The early Greek Stoics were hardly referred to at all; and of the Romans, only Epictetus and the emperor Marcus Aurelius can lay claim to an extensive influence on the religious thought of the time. Texts were drawn on as suited the interests and preoccupations of nineteenth-century writers. Of the Greek and Roman Stoic thinkers, the latter were felt to be far more useful for the situation in which Victorian Britain found itself. The expansion, maintenance and administration of the British Empire was of such great cultural importance in this period that the ideas of Stoic thinkers writing under the Roman Empire, so often compared, both favorably and unfavorably, with the British global supremacy in the nineteenth century, appeared particularly relevant. This ties in to a much broader cultural tendency within Victorian society to compare itself with imperial Rome.<sup>1</sup> The comparison which appealed, above all, was the idea that, like the Romans, the British were an active, practical people, concerned with real-life challenges and problems, not “mere” abstract thinkers as many perceived the ancient Greeks to have been.<sup>2</sup> In 1877, the historian, Charles Thomas Cruttwell, remarked of Stoicism that “what to the Greeks was a speculative principle to be drawn out by argument to its logical conclusions, to the Romans was a practical maxim to be realized in life” (Cruttwell 1877: 135).

### **Marcus Aurelius and the *Meditations***

Marcus Aurelius, in particular, as the ruler and defender of the largest empire which the world had then known, struck a chord with many middle- and upper-class writers and thinkers in Victorian society. His collection of “Thoughts to Himself,” better known in English as *The Meditations*, proved a significant hit with the mid-Victorians following George Long’s influential new translation and accompanying essays on the life and thought of the emperor, published in 1862. In the preface to his 1964 translation of the *Meditations*, Maxwell Staniforth remarked upon the cultural prominence achieved by the Stoic emperor in the years following Long’s translation. The *Meditations*, he wrote, “quickly became a cultural ‘must’ to the mid-Victorian generation [...] and during the next forty years the number of its

printings and reprintings in different styles and sizes must have been legion” (Staniforth 1964: 31). According to Staniforth, the popularity achieved by the *Meditations* in the 1860s was “not wholly surprising”; “for it does not need much imagination to picture Marcus himself as the very figure of an admired Victorian personage [...]. The grave dignity, the improving sentiments, the earnest piety of the *Meditations* were in the fullest accord with the taste of that era” (ibid.).

I would like to suggest that Marcus, as a curiously liminal figure, able to transgress the normally rigid boundaries between Christianity and agnosticism, had a particular appeal for a generation of educated men who struggled increasingly to maintain their faith. Emblematic of this generation was Matthew Arnold, who famously reviewed Long’s edition of the *Meditations* in 1863. What attracted the agnostic Arnold to the figure of Marcus was precisely the promise he held out of a Christian-like morality for those who no longer subscribed to the church’s teachings. Indeed, he saw in the *Meditations* “something of [the] very sentiment whence Christian morality draws its best power” (M. Arnold 1869: 257).<sup>3</sup> In his 1868 work, *Seekers after God*, F. W. Farrar, the author of the famous public-school novel, *Eric or Little by Little*, also stressed the strong similarities to Christianity which the *Meditations* exhibited. “Can all antiquity,” he asked, “show anything tenderer than this, or anything more close to the spirit of Christian teaching [...]?” (Farrar 1868:14). Across the channel, the French philosopher and historian Ernest Renan, author of *Marc-Aurèle et la fin du monde Antique* (Renan 1882), wrote similarly of Marcus. For Renan (1947–61: V 737, cited in Sellars 2012: 534), he represented “all that there was of goodness in the ancient world” and his *Meditations* constituted nothing less than a “gospel for those who have no faith in the supernatural” (Renan 1947–61: V 913, cited in Sellars 2012: 534).

Ironically, Marcus Aurelius, in all his popularity, shows us clearly the limitations of the attractiveness of Stoic ideas for Victorians. He represented that seemingly rare combination of the active military leader with the gentle private thinker. As Lee Behlman has insightfully remarked: Stoicism “needed to be softened to conform better to post-Rousseauian conceptions of sympathetic manhood.” The popularity of Marcus Aurelius “underscores how Victorian ideals of emotionally tempered masculinity required a sympathetic supplement [...]. He was the test-case for the sufficiency of *askesis* and detachment as ethical ideals and for assessing the condition of Christianity in England” (Behlman 2011: 3). Representing the “possibility and desirability of living an ethical life outside of Christianity,” he appealed to a significant portion of Victorian society (ibid.: 7). Crucially, he seemed to answer the criticism directed against Stoicism that it was proud, aloof and cold. Without the emotional resonance of Marcus, it would have seemed unreachable and excessive in its ascetic hardness for the majority of Victorians. Epictetus, by contrast, declared Matthew Arnold, was only “for the strong, for the few” (M. Arnold 1869: 255). In other words, Marcus Aurelius was selected from the crowd of Stoic writers because he was different; he had, Arnold wrote, a “modern applicability and living interest” (ibid.: 257). Even though Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School and Matthew Arnold’s father, thought Stoicism the noblest philosophy before Christianity he criticized it for being “absolutely unattainable” for many, including to his mind, all women, on account of its ascetic severity (T. Arnold 1845: 463).

The growing interest in Marcus Aurelius as a figurehead for agnosticism also provoked an emotional backlash from conservative Christian writers, who, like Thomas Jordan, mentioned above, interpreted the unprecedented interest in Marcus and his brand of Stoicism as an attack on traditional Christianity and national religious life. Thus, in his lectures on “Stoicism and Christianity,” Jordan worked hard to establish the inadequacy of the second-century emperor’s Stoicism when confronted with the personal spiritual comforts of Christianity and the “due

place [it gives] to the heart and its emotions” (Jordan 1884: 15). Even Matthew Arnold, one of Marcus’s greatest supporters in the Victorian period, concluded that he too was spiritually dissatisfied with Stoicism. He pictured him, at the end of his review of George Long’s 1862 translation, as “agitated, stretching out his arms for something beyond” (M. Arnold 1869: 283). Marcus’s enthusiastic editor, W. H. D Rouse, likewise commented that despite demonstrating much “religious feeling” (Rouse 1898: xvi), often “his mood is one of strenuous weariness” and “he gropes blindly after something less empty and vain” (ibid.: xx).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as writers and thinkers responded to the growing religious skepticism of the mid-Victorian period, a reaction and with it, a very different view of the Stoic emperor appeared in the work of contemporary scholars. In the words of Paul Barron Watson, an American biographer of Marcus: it became “the fashion among [...] Christian writers who [...] treat[ed] of Marcus’s reign” to depict him as a “cruel persecutor” whose attitude towards Christians during his reign was explained simply by the fact that he was “a stranger to the doctrines of Jesus Christ” (Watson 1884: 258). This view was also expressed by one of the most important commentators on Marcus’s reign among late Victorian historians, Charles Merivale, who had also been for many years the Dean of Ely. While he had been a liberal Anglican in his younger days, his opinions had become increasingly conservative by the time his work on Marcus was published in 1862 as part of Volume VII of his *History of the Romans under the Empire*.

One reviewer of Merivale’s *History*, W. B. Donne, began by praising its author as an “impartial chronicler of the Caesars” (Donne 1864: 26). When he came to the discussion of Marcus Aurelius, however, there was a distinct change of tone. While he still credited Merivale for making “due allowance for [...] the various calamities” which plagued the later period of Marcus’s reign, he complained that the reign was unrelentingly described as “an era of gloom and dismay” (ibid.: 59). “A sense of languor, if not despair, comes over us,” he declared. When we look at Merivale’s text itself, it becomes clear that he did not have a particularly high opinion of Marcus. His favorite emperor was Hadrian and chiefly because he seemed to possess everything that Marcus lacked. “I am disposed,” he wrote,

to regard the reign of Hadrian as the best of the imperial series, marked by endeavours at reform and improvement in every department of administration [... Hadrian] reminds us more than any other Roman [...] of what, we proudly style the thorough English gentleman [...]. His countenance expresses ability rather than genius, lively rather than deep feelings, wide and general sympathies rather than concentrated thought [...]. The sensual predominates in him over the ideal, the flesh over the spirit; he is [...] a man of taste rather than a philosopher.

(*Ibid.*: 54–5)

By contrast, in the preface to his 1875 *General History of Rome*, Merivale described a “morbid self-inspection” as Marcus’s dominant character trait (Merivale 1875: x). The emperor, we are told, was “little fitted for the active duties to which he was [...] called,” believing, as he did, what Merivale labeled Plato’s “splendid fallacy,” that philosophers make the best kings (ibid.: 541). In Merivale’s eyes, Marcus remained “a recluse philosopher” (ibid.: 545) with “no special talent for command” (ibid.: 543).

This lack of regard for the emperor’s practical abilities was equaled by Merivale’s condemnation of Marcus for the suffering of Christians while he was on the throne. “The cruel persecution[s] which he permitted and even enjoined can have had no other origin,” he wrote, “than the panic terror which he shared equally with his people” (ibid.: 542). For



Merivale, Marcus was a long way from the “holiest of the heathen” as liberal Anglicans like Farrar had hailed him; he was rather seen as a superstitious adherent of pagan cults (Farrar 1868: 300). Likewise, the story of his reign was presented as the inevitable victory of Christianity over paganism. Ultimately, he declared, “the fastidious pride of the Roman philosopher could not brook the simple creed on which the Christian leaned” (Merivale 1875: 545). “With the age of the Antonines,” he continued, “commences the dissolution of ancient society, and the wonderful transmutation of ideas which issued in the general reception of the Christian religion” (ibid.: xi).

Several articles in non-conformist journals produced even more scathing judgments of Marcus’s performance as emperor. An anonymous reviewer of Albert Forbiger’s *Hellas und Rom* writing in the Methodist journal, the *London Quarterly Review* in 1875, dismissed Marcus as “a gloomy and fanatical persecutor of men” not only as a result of “State necessity but by a vindictive enmity to the Christian faith” (Anon. 1875: 127). Like Merivale, this reviewer viewed Marcus’s reign as an “age of declining civilisation” (ibid.: 126) which would be “so soon and so entirely vanquished and swept away by the simple truths of the Gospel” (ibid.: 152). W. F. Adeney, who was Professor of New Testament Exegesis and Church History at Lancashire College, Manchester, expressed similar views when reviewing Renan’s *Marc-Aurèle et la fin du monde Antique* for the Congregationalist periodical, the *British Quarterly Review*, in 1883. The emperor and Renan were condemned for “declin[ing] to admit the Divine origin and lofty claims of the religion of the New Testament” (Adeney 1883: 1). Adeney also joined Merivale in using Marcus’s passion for Stoic ideas to attack his masculinity. “He delighted in meditative retirement,” he told the reader, and was consequently “less vigorous in action” than his predecessor, Antoninus Pius, whom Adeney praised as “that happy combination of the saint, the philosopher, and the man of action” (ibid.: 5).

Similar criticisms of Marcus were offered at the same time by less traditional defenders of Christianity. Thus, John Coates, for example, has argued convincingly that the Marcus Aurelius portrayed in Walter Pater’s 1885 novel, *Marius the Epicurean*, was designed, at least in part, to critique Renan’s positive assessment of the emperor’s religious skepticism in *Marc-Aurèle et la fin du monde Antique*. According to Coates, when dealing with the difficult issue of the treatment of Christians during Marcus’s reign, Pater deliberately “brushe[d] aside Renan’s numerous excuses and justifications,” referring to the persecutions as a “fatal mistake,” the responsibility for which, must lie completely with “the emperor himself” (Coates 2000: 420). In *Marius the Epicurean*, which is frequently described as the novel marking its author’s partial *rapprochement* with Christianity, Pater restated many of the same criticisms offered by Merivale and Adeney. Thus, for example, he accused Marcus of neglecting his practical duties of emperor in favor of a reclusive life as a philosopher. He likened him to a “hermit of the middle age” (Pater 1910: 201) notorious for his “ascetic pride” (ibid.: 200) and singular sadness (ibid.: 48). The Christian religion, by contrast, represented in the novel by Marius’s friend Cornelius, was characterized by “the joy [...] the serenity, the durable cheerfulness, of those who have been [...] delivered” from the fear of death (ibid.: 53).

Thus, if we concentrate only on the great Stoic thinkers and writers, we see that the cultural appeal of Stoicism was fairly limited. Marcus Aurelius was the only figure whose writings elicited a broader appeal, albeit not a popular one, and that because he, more than any other Stoic thinker, seemed to engage with moral and religious questions of profound importance to Victorian writers. However, as we have seen, while many hailed Marcus as a modern exemplar of a moral, agnostic life, many others criticized his philosophy, labeling him an effeminate hypocrite and an ascetic recluse.

### Stoicism in popular discourse

If, though, we consider Stoicism less in terms of its formal doctrines and great thinkers, and concentrate instead on the vocabulary of “stoicism” in more popular discourse, there is a case for arguing that its impact was much greater. Commentators in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries themselves identified Stoicism’s ability to adapt to a wide range of historical contexts as its peculiar “genius” over the ages. A writer in the *Saturday Review* in 1910 referred to the “the continual modifications which Stoicism underwent” over the centuries which “makes the task of defining its principles and exhibiting them in their historical development exceedingly hard and laborious” (Anon. 1910: 458). For many Victorian and Edwardian commentators, there had been many Stoicisms in the course of human history. “The Stoic philosophy of Rome,” declared one writer in the *Academy*,

associated with the name of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius – was a vastly different thing from the Stoicism of Greece of the fourth century B.C. [...]. Transplanted from its original home, mellowed by time and by assimilation of elements from other philosophies, it had become much more expansive and humane than the Stoicism of the earlier Greek period.

(Anon. 1907: 918)<sup>4</sup>

Nor did such writers think this principle any less true in relation to their own age. When discussing Stoicism at the start of the twentieth century, Edith Gray Wheelwright remarked that it was best understood as “a transfigured doctrine acceptable to modern minds.” “It must be in harmony with the new civil order,” she observed, incorporating “a wider conception of freedom and [...] a sounder basis of faith” (Wheelwright 1911: 326). Stoicism has then always been in a state of transformation, of becoming, varying with society and historical context. This quality of flexibility was, according to many late Victorian commentators, precisely what gave Stoicism its modern relevance and attraction.

However, to understand this breadth of appeal, writers at the time made clear that we must move beyond the traditional canon of Stoic thinkers. As a philosophy, Stoicism’s “roots,” we are told in a review of G. H. Rendall’s 1898 translation of Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations*, “struck deep in that “imperious instinct of cosmic unity and communion between human and divine, which haunts men with persistent power.” “Dr Rendall,” the reviewer continued, “admirably illustrates this by a poem of Emily Brontë which perfectly expresses the genius of Stoicism, though its formal doctrines were probably to her a sealed book” (Anon. 1898: 560). This tells us an important lesson – in any consideration of Victorian Stoicism we have to look beyond the “formal doctrines,” as this reviewer puts it, to consider what he calls the “genius” of Stoicism.

One form in which Stoic ideas and principles were discussed at a more popular level was in relation to the British national character – more particularly, to the character of the social elite. At this level, though, it had lost any meaningful connection with individual writers or thinkers; what remained was a close cultural connection with the aristocracy, upper and middle classes, those groups broadly associated with a classical education. In this they may be compared to the Romans they so admired – where the display of Stoic virtues in public became fashionable with many of the city’s elite especially in the late Republic and early Empire, although many would have been uninstructed in the formal doctrines of the Porch. The “*vir pietate gravis*” embodied the Stoic ideal, a writer in the *Saturday Review* declared in 1911, and “the best Romans were essentially Stoic before they heard the name of Zeno”

(Anon. 1911: 403). If we imagine Stoicism more broadly, as an attitude to life, then its impact appears much more considerable. “Social stoicism,” writes one mid-Victorian reviewer, is “one of the most singular features of the age in which we live and with respect to certain classes in society, it is both very true and most important” (Anon. 1860: 496). Thomas Carlyle referred similarly to the “cheerful Stoicism” of the British aristocracy (Anon. 1903: 62), while J. A. Mangan identified “a hard secular morality,” characterized by “stoicism, hardiness and endurance” as defining manliness in the English public schools in the late nineteenth century (Mangan and Walvin 1987: 1).

Although, when considered in this way, there is evidence of a much wider reception of Stoicism, it was never what might be termed a popular attitude to life. The same review impresses upon the reader that the seeming stoicism of the lower classes in England is illusory, as it forms no part of a consistent training and they are unable to control their emotions most of the time. Such reserve as they display “does not rise above the level of habit and instinct”; true “social Stoicism” serves rather to distinguish the English gentleman from others in society: “Almost all the essential characteristics of the manners of English gentlemen [...] are derived ultimately from the traditional estimate of courage and manliness which prevails amongst boys at public schools [...]. The result of this is that the social stoicism of the best-educated part of the community goes very much deeper than the composed and undramatic manner of other classes of Englishmen” (Anon. 1860: 496). Thus it is little surprise to see the language of Stoicism associated with other significant upper-class and elite Victorian movements such as Muscular Christianity. Charles Kingsley suggested repeatedly that true manliness required a “stoic patience” (Rosen 1994: 19).

Having said this, there were concerted efforts on the part of the educated elite in Britain to popularize the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius at least. Matthew Arnold declared in his review of Long’s translation that he wanted to make Marcus Aurelius as popular as Thomas a Kempis’s *Imitation of Christ* and his name as familiar as Socrates (M. Arnold 1869: 14). W. H. Farrar’s *Seekers after God*, published in 1868, sought to introduce the Roman Stoics more generally to a wider domestic audience as part of Macmillan’s Sunday Library for Household Reading series. George Long, himself a classics master at Brighton College and champion of secondary-school reform, translated Marcus’s *Meditations* along with other classical texts including those of Cicero for schoolchildren, and Matthew Arnold praised him for writing for “men engaged in the current of contemporary life and action” (M. Arnold 1869: 289).

On one level, such drives may be judged as having been successful with many imitative copies being produced for use in schools. Long’s own translation of the *Meditations* went through no less than seven reprints before the end of the century. Moreover, it appears to have sparked a range of imitative editions which appeared at intervals in the last years of the Victorian era. Thus, for example, W. H. D. Rouse, while a classics master at Rugby School, published an edition of Meric Casaubon’s translation of the *Meditations* in 1898. The popularity of Long’s translation in the USA also resulted in a number of American editions of Marcus. Most prominent among these was a version of Long’s translation published by the American philanthropist, Edwin Ginn, in 1893. In the preface, he explained at some length his reasons for wanting to introduce schoolchildren to the ideas of Marcus. It was, above all, the maturing effect which he believed the Stoic philosophy to have upon the character and mind of children which constituted for him the greatest attraction of the *Meditations*.

The principle, however, that has governed us in selecting reading for the young has been to secure the best that we could find in all ages for grown-up people. The milk and water diet [often] provided for [...] children is not especially

complimentary to them. They like to be treated like little men and women, capable of appreciating a good thing. One finds in this royal philosopher a rare generosity, sweetness and humility, qualities alike suited to all ages.

(Ginn 1893: v)

Just like Arnold, Farrar and Long himself, Ginn hoped that the figure of Marcus would provide schoolchildren with a sympathetic model to emulate in both their intellectual and moral development, especially with the decline of an overtly Christian morality in schools. “Requiring the use of such literature in [...] schools,” he mused, would be so much more valuable than “the adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing of interminable numbers, the memorizing of all the capes, bays and rivers in the world, and the dates of all the battles that have occurred since the creation of man.” “We should strive to stimulate the thinking powers of children,” he urged, “leading them to form wise judgments concerning the important things of life” (Ginn 1893: viii).

Likewise, from the late 1860s onwards, we see the publication of several pocket histories of Marcus’s reign and students’ guides to Roman history which drew heavily on Long’s translation when dealing with the period when Marcus was emperor. Among the most popular were Charles Thomas Cruttwell’s *A History of Roman Literature from the Earliest Period to the Death of Marcus Aurelius* which first appeared in 1877 and went through several reprints by the end of the century. Likewise, J. B. Bury’s *History of the Roman Empire from Its Foundation to the Death of Marcus Aurelius*, first published in 1893 as part of the Student’s Roman Empire series (see Bury 1893).

### **The limitations of “social Stoicism”**

However, it is important to note that while there were some efforts made to make Marcus’s writings a staple of the classical diet of schools, they were nowhere near as popular as the standard Latin poets and historians. This was partly because they were considered too complicated for schoolchildren. Edwin Ginn began his 1893 edition of Long’s translation for schools with a long justification of his decision to present Marcus’s writings to children. “Perhaps some may question the wisdom,” he wrote, “of putting out the Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius [...] to be used as a Reader by children in [...] schools. It may appear to them better suited to the mature mind” (Ginn 1893: v). In his 1898 translation, G. H. Rendall, classical scholar and headmaster of Charterhouse School, admitted similarly that “for purposes of education, the classical writers justly enjoy more vogue, and are better suited to train taste, intellect, and imagination” (Rendall 1898: iii).

Moreover, these efforts at popularization were invariably made by members of the elite and remained stamped with an elite character. Richard Graves admitted in his preface that the *Meditations* were “extremely difficult and abstruse” and could therefore not be enjoyed by a truly popular audience used to consuming far more readable though less edifying texts (Graves 1792: vi). George Long too remarked that the general reader was not yet educated enough to “encourage the translators and publishers of cheaper versions of Greek and Roman authors” ([Long] 1829: 183). Examining the wider context of the reception of Marcus and his *Meditations*, Lee Behlman has identified the interest shown in them as forming part of “an elaborate project of historical nostalgia” which enthralled the British upper classes for much of the nineteenth century (Behlman 2011: 2). Even when we move away from the writers themselves and the complexity of their ideas, we see that stoicism as an attitude or approach to life was also something largely restricted to the upper classes. In his 1882 translation and commentary on the fourth book of Marcus’s *Meditations*, the Professor of Greek at

Queen's University, Belfast, Hastings Crossley, asked himself why this might have been. "It may seem strange, from more than one point of view," he wrote, "that Roman Stoicism has not attracted more attention in England – I mean attention of the practical sort as distinguished from that which springs from literary or historical curiosity. For it has undoubtedly an affinity with the English character" (Crossley 1882: ix). However, what Crossley really meant was that it had an affinity with the character associated with the English elite and with the public-school system which educated them.

Despite the claim of G. H. Rendall that Marcus Aurelius had enchanted both the "simple and learned" (Rendall 1898: iv), the wider public remained aloof from his writings. William Capes, writing in his study, *Stoicism*, in 1880, reflected on the lack of appeal which Stoicism seemed to hold for ordinary people in both Roman times and his own: "It was powerless to move the masses, for it had no charm to heal the wounds or soothe the sufferings of stricken manhood, while with the strong and self-contained it might easily feed a sort of Pharisaic pride which would thank God that it was not as other men" (Capes 1880: 198). In this sense, Stoicism suffered doubly as a philosophy for the elite – firstly, because of its association with the public schools and the difficulty of classical learning, and secondly, because of the supposed moral superiority of those who identified with it. As the author of a 1903 article in the journal, *Academy and Literature*, put it:

[I]n spite of its benignant grace, in spite of this solemn beauty that is so nearly divine, why is it then that the mention of Stoicism gives poor mankind the shivers, as though a superior person were walking over our graves? When we speak of Stoics [...] we seem to see a procession of grey forms [...] stalking unmoved through this dirty puddle of a world, and betraying their mental torture only by the fixity of their smile.

(Anon. 1903: 62)

Followers of Stoicism, the same writer continued, seem to behave towards other people "like philanthropists entertaining the poor with educational games in the East-end." Ordinary men and women cannot connect with them as "poor bedraggled and bespattered mortals." "Stoicism had all the virtues," he concluded, "We treat it with honour and respect; we do it reverence, and we pass. It is magnificent, but it is not peace" (ibid.).

For those attracted to the growing socialist movement in Britain towards the end of the nineteenth century, the exclusivity of Stoicism seemed to swim against the tide of change, revealing it to be not simply antisocial but antimodern. The Fabian socialist, Arthur Clutton Brock, declared in a 1903 article, entitled "Marcus Aurelius and Stoicism," that

[t]he Stoic philosophy, though Epictetus and Marcus out of their own natural kindness gave it a more social turn, was unsocial in its essence. It was a system designed for the elect, and taught that the reward of virtue lay in the glory of proving that you were not as the common run of men [...]. Modern morality is based upon both [faith in humanity and hopes for its future], and they are the theoretic foundation of the practical love which it teaches [...]. It was fortified with none of the glorious truths of which experience has made us sure; and it seems a clumsy and rickety invention to us who live in an age of more confident and successful morality.

(Brock 1903: 220)

Brock's critique was especially striking as it maintained not simply that Stoicism was socially exclusive, which was an old line of attack; but also, and crucially, that it was antimodern.

For writers like Brock, modernity and modern thought were distinguished by socialism and by cooperation. Edith Gray Wheelwright, the social critic and suffragette, struck a similar note. “For the struggling, ignorant mass of humanity,” she told her readers in the *Westminster Review*, “the Stoic had small care; his system was applicable only to the higher types, and he took no count of the moral achievements of individual men in the discipline of common life.” Describing, as Brock had done, a “widening conception of sympathy” as “the chief moral product of our time” with its emphasis on “Co-operation, unity, solidarity,” she concluded sadly that “they are not the ideals with which Stoicism [... was] mainly concerned” (Wheelwright 1911: 324).

Stoicism’s genius, according to its Victorian champions, had always been its seemingly unique ability among philosophical systems, to adapt itself to the specific conditions, needs and desires of every historical context. Yet, with the introduction of universal male suffrage and the arrival of socialism as a major political force in Britain, advocating social and political equality, a system of thought which seemed, however unfairly, to be identified with, and to privilege, the social elite, lost its appeal for many.<sup>5</sup> In an important sense, Stoicism’s seemingly infinite ability to adapt had come to an end. Although the first decades of the twentieth century were to witness a renewed scholarly interest in both Greek and Roman Stoic thinkers, the drive which the Victorian period had seen to popularize Stoic ideas beyond the upper class, in particular, through the figure and writings of Marcus Aurelius, would not be seen again.

## Notes

- 1 For the comparison between the British Empire and imperial Rome, see, for example, Butler 2012; Bradley 2010; Edwards 1999.
- 2 Compare Capes 1880: 69: “It was far otherwise with the stern doctrines of the Porch, which were much more akin to the Roman type of character than to the Greek itself.”
- 3 On occasion Seneca was also able to attract these kinds of comparisons. William Capes wrote thus of Seneca (Capes 1880: 127–8): He may be credited with “tempering the hard formalism of his school with tones of tenderness and sympathy, and with the language of a religious feeling which rises at times almost to a Christian level.” He is “almost a Christian in disguise”; 166: “Men could not but be struck with the echoes of Christian thought and feeling, which occur more frequently in Seneca than in any heathen writer.”
- 4 Cf. Capes 1880: 54–5. The “practical mind of Rome” imparted to Stoicism new “warmth and colour and many-sided interest.”
- 5 (*Editor’s note* – J.S.) It is also perhaps worth noting that some members of the anarchist tradition claimed Stoicism as their own. In particular, Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) described Zeno of Citium as “the best exponent of Anarchist philosophy in ancient Greece” (Kropotkin 1910: 915). A little later Max Nettlau (1865–1944), the first historian of anarchism, devoted the opening chapter of the first volume of his multivolume history of anarchism to Zeno of Citium (Nettlau 1925: 10–18). Both were drawing on the scholarly work of Georg Adler (see Adler 1899).

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# STOICISM IN AMERICA

*Kenneth S. Sacks*

When, in 1924, University of Michigan professor of philosophy R. M. Wenley wrote on the modern influence of Stoicism, it did not occur to him to mention any intellectuals from his own country (Wenley 1924). To this day, Stoicism hardly makes an appearance in standard handbooks on American philosophy and culture.<sup>1</sup> And yet, to varying degrees, Stoicism has always been present. Because it is an uneven presence, parts of this survey are necessarily patchwork. But what emerges from this historical investigation is that Stoicism is a recurrent and an occasionally important theme in America.

## **Stoicism in early America**

As part of a library that in 1638 he left to a college that would bear his name, John Harvard included the work of Epictetus (Lawson 1979: 179). But the existence of a book doesn't prove the dissemination of its ideas. If already "the waves of the Stoic revival washed on New England shores," the emotional Augustinian aspect of Puritan pietism, suggests one authority, "served as a barrier against the full absorption of the Stoic spirit" (Fiering 1981a: 153). Attempts to identify Stoic thought in earliest America confront a lack of solid evidence, and determining its influence is by inference alone.

Roger Williams, immigrating in 1631, was an individual of extraordinary creativity and vision. Founding the colony of Rhode Island, he imposed "the wall of separation" between church and state, urged the abolition of slavery, and argued for a universal civil peace for all citizens with full freedom of belief. There are certain obvious similarities, but it cannot be established with confidence that Williams read and drew direct inspiration from the Stoics (despite Nussbaum 2010: 34–71).

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), often considered the country's greatest theologian, was educated at Yale and powerfully engaged with the transatlantic philosophical currents. Although Puritan belief in original sin might preclude common ground, Edwards is the object of recent interest in Christian Neostoicism. Edwards defines true virtue as "that consent, propensity and union of heart to being in general, which is immediately exercised in a general good will." His power of consent, emphasis on progress toward complete virtue, and on the conversion experience approximates primary moral tasks of classical Stoicism;<sup>2</sup> and his sermons may also be read as akin to Hadot's spiritual exercises (Spohn 2003). But the gulf



remains wide, and Edwards's best intellectual biographers find no evidence that he read the Stoics intensively, Norman Fiering suggesting only that he was "exposed" to Cicero's *De officiis*.<sup>3</sup> What might be best said is that at times Edwards's thought "runs parallel to Stoicism."<sup>4</sup>

Following soon on Edwards, the generation of the American Founders, faced with constructing a government and nation, fully engaged with the classical tradition. These gifted creators of the American polity lived in a world of self-constructed classicism, speaking the language of mixed constitutions, representative government, natural rights, and heroic sacrifice. Gordon Wood judges that knowledge of the classics during the Revolutionary period "was not only a scholarly ornament of educated Americans; it helped to shape their values and their ideals of behavior" (Wood 1969: 49).

Within that world, the degree to which Stoicism played a role is strongly debated. Meyer Reinhold, who helped establish the field of classical reception in the United States, thought Stoicism was generally viewed unfavorably during the Revolutionary War period (Reinhold 1984: 151–2). Carl J. Richard, in a more recent evaluation, argues that the Founders' belief in natural law, the pursuit of virtue, the capacity to endure hardship, and an optimistic view of human nature derived directly from their reading of classical Stoicism (Richard 1994: 175–84). Martha C. Nussbaum, whose views on early America inform her arguments on current legal theory, adds that only in ancient Rome were Stoic ideas more "diffused into the general culture" than in eighteenth-century America, which "runs a close second" (Nussbaum 2010: 78). But the evidence Richard and Nussbaum adduce is surprisingly thin.

When lacking explicit acknowledgement of intellectual indebtedness, measuring the influence of ideas is among the most difficult of historical tasks. The task is compounded when evaluating the influence of the classical tradition, which was taught and read canonically and then used to address complex cultural demands. If Stoicism's presence was "diffused," what is the interpretative value of knowing that Thomas Jefferson died with a volume of Seneca on his reading stand? Or far more importantly, that he likely authored the words of the Declaration of Independence – that all "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights" – which obviously at some level reflects Stoic natural law? Jefferson was one of the few public figures of his generation who did acknowledge allegiance to a formal philosophy, and that philosophy was Epicureanism. About Stoicism, he wrote caustically that, "Epictetus, indeed, has given us what was good of the Stoics; all beyond, of their dogmas, being hypocrisy and grimacy [...]. Seneca is indeed a fine moralist, disfiguring his work at times with some Stoicisms."<sup>5</sup> In referencing all possible sources of inspiration for the Declaration of Independence – from constitutionalist theories of resistance through Locke, Scottish Common Sense, republicanism, and the theology of Viscount Bolingbroke – David Armitage suggests that the Declaration "could have been indebted to all these sources at once," which would explain "its ability to appeal simultaneously to many different audiences" (Armitage 2002: 41).

Despite such uncertainty, Stoicism is instrumental in current interpretations of the Revolutionary War period, having some application to political, but greater direct application to social, constructions. Until the 1960s, it was widely accepted that Lockean liberalism (itself containing Stoic elements) provided the intellectual framework for the birth of the American polity. Since then, a strong, though continuously contested, case has been made that instead republicanism provided the essential ideology.<sup>6</sup> Republican philosophy believed that the new country, in contrast to what was perceived to be corrupt European governance and society, could endow its citizens with inalienable liberties and educate them to live virtuously. Linked to republican virtue is the notion of sensibility: rational self-control over the passions.<sup>7</sup> John

Adams wrote in early 1776 that, “Virtue and Simplicity of Manners are indispensably necessary in a Republic [...]. There must be a positive Passion for the public good” (J. Adams 1980: III 398).

Among the most often-referenced cultural manifestations of American republican sensibility is George Washington’s emulation of Cato the Younger (Morison 1989). Washington apparently held no strong belief in a Christian god, seeking instead inspiration and consolation in Stoicism. As a young man in the colony of Virginia, Washington was friendly with the neighboring Fairfax family and in their library discovered Stoic books; Washington himself owned and read an outline of Seneca’s philosophy. Washington drew special inspiration from Addison’s *Cato: A Tragedy*. He had the play, which focuses on opposition to tyranny and the heroic suicide at Utica, put on at Valley Forge to encourage his troops and quoted it when complaining of the stresses of the Presidency.

Heroic stoic-like behavior that demonstrated controlled and appropriate emotion pervaded contemporary English literature and made its way to the American colonies, with Addison’s *Cato* its most popular expression. Benjamin Franklin quoted it on the first page of his Virtue Book. Schoolchildren read the play as inspiration for those who believed their country akin to the moral ideal of Cato’s Utica. Its romantic subplots fit with the contemporary social program for female modesty (Litto 1966).

In interpreting Cato’s carefully controlled display of affection on behalf of his own republican cause, Julie Ellison argues that, “Stoicism and sensibility provoke each other, and the republican hero earns his cultural keep by justifying other men’s tears” (Ellison 1999: 71). The domestication of the Stoic on behalf of a virtuous society whose “source of moral judgment lay in [its] feelings” (Barker-Benfield 2010: 403) resulted in the “sensitive Stoic” (Donaldson 1973: 378). This virtuous American citizen with disciplined emotional response approximates the position of contemporary secular Neostoics. But the interpretation depends on accepting the centrality of republicanism and on particular readings of literary texts; competing theories will evolve.

### **Nineteenth-century Stoicism**

At some point following the ratification of the Constitution (1787), with its demonstrated preference for representative government over the more classical mixed types, political concern for classical models began to fade.<sup>8</sup> Correspondingly, our knowledge of interest in Stoicism passes from those political circles to the first concentrated cohort of American intellectuals, the Transcendentalists. Most individuals in this loosely knit, mid-nineteenth-century group lived around Boston and nearly all were recent graduates of Harvard. Emerging out of a strong training in the classics, a potted exposure to Locke and Scottish Common Sense, and the subsequent discovery of German idealism in the face of fierce resistance from their professors, Transcendentalists were eclectic and experimental within a broad framework of Kantian phenomenology.

Largely constructed out of idealist philosophies, Transcendentalism was not inherently compatible with Stoicism. Theodore Parker, its deepest and most disciplined thinker, acknowledges Stoicism’s alignment with nature (with which Transcendentalists, drawing on European Romanticism, were sympathetic): “Those [Stoics] who have the moral rule follow nature, live conformably to human nature, in its relationship to the nature of the universe, conformably to right [...]” But Stoics deny the power of emotion, which provides insight to the Transcendentalist: “In ethics the individual is sacrificed to the universal, and [...] annihilates passion after passion, and proclaims peace when it makes solitude.” And therefore

Stoicism lacks the political engagement that Transcendentalism was then rapidly embracing: “They had no conception of the moral sense of man. All is too intellectual; the good is of the mind, not the conscience” (Parker 1864: II 63–6).

Despite being somewhat in agreement with Parker, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, Transcendentalism’s most wide-ranging thinkers, actively draw on Stoicism. Emerson importantly references it in explaining his own philosophy of self-reliance – one of the essential cultural principles of the American experience. In the Divinity School Address (1838) he declares that: “The sublime is excited in me by the great stoical doctrine, Obey thyself. That which shows God in me, fortifies me.” He evokes Stoicism in his signature essay, “Self-Reliance” (1841): “Let a Stoic open the resources of man, and tell men they are not leaning willows, but can and must detach themselves; that with the exercise of self-trust, new powers shall appear.” The next year, in his public *apologia*, “The Transcendentalist,” Emerson aligns Stoicism with Transcendentalism in listing philosophies that have resisted oppressive authority.<sup>9</sup>

As does Parker, Emerson understands Stoicism in its classical expression which largely denies, rather than (as in republican sensibility) focuses, the passions. Memorializing Margaret Fuller, Emerson recalls: “I remember that she made me laugh more than I liked; for I was, at that time, an eager scholar of ethics, and had tasted the sweets of solitude and stoicism” (Channing 1852: 202). Mostly a Neoplatonist by inclination, for Emerson the soul looks toward the noumenal, but has certain sympathies for the phenomenal, world. Viewing the material world largely as his plaything and as stimulation for higher ideas, Emerson could then mock Stoic discipline: “Let the stoics say what they please, we do not eat for the good of living, but because the meat is savory and the appetite is keen” and “There is no permanent wise man, except in the figment of the stoics.”<sup>10</sup> What he took mostly from his understanding of Stoic self-sufficiency was the courage to stand apart so as to tap an inner truth. Though owing it no small intellectual debt, to Emerson Stoicism was a means but certainly not an end.

Accordingly, there are fragments in Emerson’s expressions and action that reflect his application of Stoicism. If ancient Stoics generally lived in their present thoughts rather than in conversation with their own past masters (Sellars 2006: 27–30), what Emerson announced in his seminal “The American Scholar” is a proof text for that.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, as Stoics practiced the spiritual exercise of considering with detachment the hypothetical death of one’s own child (Seneca, *Prov.* 4.5), in “Experience” Emerson famously – critics say cruelly – dismissed any feeling for his recently deceased young son.<sup>12</sup> But because we read of his heartbreaking anguish in earlier letters to friends, perhaps Emerson here is publicly lamenting his Stoicism and his inability to put full purchase to his grief. It is also possible to apply with some success a Stoic reading to his great, paired essays, “Fate” and “Power” (Woelfel 2011), and Emerson’s eventual decision to risk his self-reliance and join the abolitionist movement can be understood as his granting Stoic consent.<sup>13</sup>

In 1838, the year after graduating college, Henry David Thoreau, starting a journal on the advice of Emerson, summarized Diogenes Laertius’s “Life of Zeno” and observed prophetically: “Zeno the stoic stood in precisely the same relation to the world that I do now.” Thoreau then commented on Zeno’s arrival at Athens: “the true Zeno sails ever a placid sea. Play high, play low, – rain, sleet, or snow, – it’s all the same with the Stoic.”<sup>14</sup> But Thoreau refused to be tethered to any philosophical system, announcing at the beginning of *Walden*: “To be a philosopher is [...] to live according to [wisdom’s] dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically.”

Thoreau's friend, the poet Ellery Channing, described him as coming naturally to Stoicism, while "not taught from Epictetus" (Richardson 1986: 191). Scholars concede Thoreau's lack of formalism but search for aspects of his writings that are congruent with Stoic qualities, a challenging task given his highly original thinking and life habits. Identifying elements of Stoicism, Furtak (2003) suggests that Thoreau was temperamentally more a Cynic than Stoic; Hadot (2005) argues that he was more Epicurean than Stoic; and Svoboda, responding to Hadot, insists that Thoreau was more Stoic than Epicurean, but was effectively neither.<sup>15</sup> For Svoboda, "the Stoic appeals to the rational, Thoreau to the spiritual and moral." To Hadot, Thoreau is Epicurean in seeking only basic needs but Stoic in pursuing solitude and communing with nature.

In fact, most importantly for Emerson and Thoreau truth emerges from the study of nature (Richardson 1986: 20–1). Both wrote essential texts of the American naturalist movement (Emerson: *Nature*; Thoreau: *Walden*, "Walking," and others). And in lockstep, they summoned natural law in their emerging public support for abolition. Thoreau published *Resistance to Civil Government* (later renamed *Civil Disobedience*) in 1849 to justify why he went to jail rather than pay taxes which, he argued, would have gone to support the Mexican–American War – a conflict of transparent imperialism that complicated limiting the future expansion of slavery. Thoreau questioned whether one need obey a humanly constructed constitution that codified slavery:

Seen from a lower point of view, the Constitution [and local laws and courts], with all its faults, is very good [...] but seen from [...] the highest [point of view], who shall say what they are, or that they are worth looking at or thinking of at all?

Emerson argued similarly, claiming that "an immoral law is void" and appealing to moral leaders such as Jesus and Moses, who "held that law was not an opinion [...] but a transcript of natural rights" (Myerson and Gougeon 1995: 100–1). A few years later, Thoreau and Emerson refined their brief in justifying the violent deeds of abolitionist John Brown as being consistent with American higher law expressed in the self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence (Rosenblum 1986: xvi–xvii; Sacks 2008: xxx).

Arguments for abolition based on higher law were then common, and by the time Emerson and Thoreau were making their own, they were reading so widely – including Hindu spiritualism – that theirs cannot be linked directly to Stoicism. But just as it is important to acknowledge some level of Stoic background to the Declaration itself, Emerson and Thoreau, demonstrably versed in Stoicism, had that philosophy as reference point.

The Civil War produced almost indescribable suffering, and Northern intellectuals sought inspiration and comfort in Stoicism. Transcendentalist and long-time radical abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson published an edition of Epictetus's *Enchiridion* as the war was ending (Higginson 1865). In its preface, Higginson observed that "I am acquainted with no book [...] in which the inevitable laws of retribution are more grandly stated." Then a colonel in the First South Carolina Volunteers, which otherwise consisted of runaway slaves, Higginson reflected on the emancipated status of Epictetus and added that "[t]here seemed a special appropriateness, also, in coming to this work from a camp of colored soldiers."

Southerners especially drew on Stoicism. Robert E. Lee, the Son of the South, both before and after the Civil War relied heavily on Marcus Aurelius for solace, and that is sometimes used to explain his sense of fatalism – considered his chief military flaw (Dabbs 1964: 122–9). In his classic meditation on early southern honor, Bertram Wyatt-Brown argues that "the Stoic–Christian synthesis" was the guiding value of the antebellum South.

Although such a synthesis may exist, the Stoicism he proposes is “honor-bound fatalism” and an expression of shame culture, including such qualities as the “opinion of others as an indispensable part of personal identity and the gauge of self-worth” and “physical appearance.” When Thomas Jefferson advises his nephew, “ask yourself how you would act were all the world looking at you, and act accordingly,” Wyatt-Brown attributes the advice to Stoic influence.<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to reconcile honor dependent on external judgment with classical Stoicism’s philosophy of self-sufficiency, and some refinement is desirable here.

It is well known that southern apologists for slavery appealed to Aristotle’s views on natural servitude. What has not been noted by Wyatt-Brown and other historians of the South is that some apologists also mounted a Stoic defense. Thomas R. R. Cobb, perhaps the most learned and articulate pro-slavery apologist, recurrently invoked Seneca in suggesting that slaves should be treated kindly, not that slavery need be abolished.<sup>17</sup> And Samuel Seabury used a fundamentally Stoic insight in turning the question of chattel slavery into one of spiritual freedom: “For slaves and masters are equally free, within their respective spheres, to choose and determine their own actions; to exercise the share of reason and judgment which God has given them; to follow the dictates of conscience” (Seabury 1861: 41).

Straddling the question was Francis Lieber, a brilliant German émigré who, for financial reasons, left the North to take a chair of history and political economy at South Carolina College (today the University of South Carolina). At the time only cautiously anti-slavery (even owning household slaves himself; Freidel 1947: 223–58), in an 1839 address on character he considers a gentleman’s proper responsibility to the slave. In some ways anticipating Cobb, Lieber references Cicero’s *De legibus* that “the fair and reluctant use of every power which we may possess over others is one of the truest tests of the gentleman” and cites *De officiis* in urging that “we should not use slaves otherwise than we do our day-laborers” (Lieber 1847: 104–5). As soon as Lieber departed the South, he became a public abolitionist.

For northern abolitionist Higginson, Stoicism was a symbol of liberation; for southern defenders of slavery, it justified their cause; and, for an anti-slavery sympathizer living in the South, Stoicism provided the social code for moderate treatment of the enslaved. That, in his magisterial study of the intellectual life of the antebellum South, Michael O’Brien barely mentions Stoicism suggests that the topic merits further consideration.<sup>18</sup> A promising enterprise might involve reading southern literature – including church sermons and letters to the war front – through a Stoic lens up to and including Reconstruction.

Back in the North and a few years before his death, Walt Whitman confided to a friend that: “Epictetus is the one of all my old cronies who has lasted to this day [...]. He [...] is a universe in himself” (in Taubel 1908: II 71). In his youth and throughout his life, Whitman leaned heavily on Epictetus and a bit less so on Marcus. His personal philosophy was a mixture of Stoicism and Epicureanism, perhaps influenced by Frances Wright’s *A Few Days in Athens* (1822), a largely Epicurean novel that features a debate between Zeno and Epicurus. (Wright would become a permanent American resident, but she wrote *A Few Days in Athens* on a return visit to Scotland, and the novel bears the influence of her homeland.) Stoic sentiments are present in Whitman’s poetry, exemplified by this renowned passage from *Leaves of Grass*: “I exist as I am, that is enough / If no other in the world be aware I sit content, / And if each and all be aware I sit content.”<sup>19</sup>

With Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman expressing Stoic sentiments, it is inevitable that Emily Dickinson might be read similarly.<sup>20</sup> The problem with this reading – as with nearly every reading of Dickinson – is that, even more than Emerson’s, her expressions are irregular shards that cut in many directions at once. “Never for Society / One shall seek in vain / Who his own acquaintance / Cultivate” seems a Stoic expression of self-sufficiency, but her

appreciation that her own fame will likely be posthumous demonstrates that she took comfort in the thought of that fame: “Success is counted Sweetest / By those who ne’er succeed.” And as to her extreme reclusiveness, was it a “true economy [...] protecting her from the inconsequential facts of daily life” (Martin 1967: 286) and so a Stoic effort at avoiding pain and distraction? Or was it an unexamined agoraphobia (as is so often speculated) that merely caused her ever increasing distress?

In 1866, a young, depressed William James became a devoted reader of Marcus Aurelius and used Stoicism to help him understand his evolving concept of “the self-governing resistance of the ego to the world. Life shall be built [on] doing and creating and suffering.”<sup>21</sup> James debated religion from a Stoic point of view with his equally prominent father and later sent younger brother Henry a copy of the *Meditations*.<sup>22</sup>

But in the next decade, with the trauma of the Civil War fading, James turned from Stoicism to become a central figure among Pragmatists.

Pragmatism, America’s claim to an original philosophy, originated with Charles Sanders Peirce and several friends around what they sometimes called “the Metaphysical Club.” Many of the first generation of Pragmatists were students of Transcendentalism and reflect their idealism. Epistemologically, early Pragmatists believe that the meaning of a thought is directly related to its ultimate intent: that thoughts are actively cultivated habits whose contents are evaluated based on the role they play in one’s actions. For the Stoic, no thought occurs without granting it consent, and the strength and reasoning behind that consent are essential considerations in determining the thought. Proper cognition for Pragmatists results in an active position within the material world; for Stoics, it is within the mental world – a divergence between the two philosophies that helps lead to significant differences, amplified especially by Pragmatism’s commitment to social progress and reform. In “The Present Dilemma in Philosophy” (1907), James described philosophers as either “tough minded” (tending toward materialism and fatalism) or “tender minded” (tending toward idealism and free will). Despite their broad diversity of opinion, Pragmatists generally viewed Stoics as tough and themselves as tender.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Peirce is harshly critical. Stoics hold “philistine views”; the philosophy is “a system of the most wooden materialism. Stoicism, we can hardly doubt, has been secretly entertained by millions throughout the Christian era – at any rate, down to the introduction of ether and chloroform”; and “the great maxim of stoic morals – Follow Nature [...] diverge[s] considerably from stoical apathy.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, by 1875 James writes to his fiancée that, “[t]he hardness of my Stoicism oppresses me sometimes,” as he struggled to find a more emotional religious experience (Sutton 2009: 79; Stroud 2012). That struggle culminates in the second lecture of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: “[T]here is a frosty chill about [Marcus Aurelius’s] words that you rarely find in a Jewish, and never in a Christian piece of religious writing [...] how devoid of passion or exaltation the spirit of the Roman Emperor is!” (James 1902: 48).<sup>24</sup>

John Dewey, too, is early on attracted to Stoicism because of its demand for an alignment with nature (Dewey 1977: 49), but the later, pragmatic Dewey loses interest. In fact, Dewey’s former student Randolph S. Bourne (1886–1918), short-lived but exerting significant influence, published an extended attack on Stoicism. Believing in a complex mix of cosmopolitanism and local identity, Bourne saw Stoicism as the precondition for the Christianity he abhorred: “If we say we feel instinctively that the Christian-Stoical ethics is nobler than the Greek ideal, it is because we have lived so long and so submissively in an ugly, deformed world of social misery and maladjustment that we have lost our sense of true ethical values” (Bourne 1913: 370).

Bourne may have viewed Stoicism as “the senility of Greek thought and the infancy of Christian faith” (Bourne 1913: 365). But for Boston Brahmin and Unitarian Henry Adams (1838–1918), a celebrated intellectual and author of the autobiographical masterpiece, *The Education of Henry Adams*, Stoicism was the alternative to Christianity. In the face of his sister’s premature death, Adams considered that “Stoicism was perhaps the best [anodyne],” as he could not understand how a “personal deity” would allow his sister to suffer. Later, in admiring the courage demonstrated by several close friends in rapid decline, Adams acknowledged that, “the affectation of readiness for death is a stage rôle, and stoicism is a stupid resource, though the only one” (H. Adams 1918: 288–9, 395). After completing *Education* and himself infirm, he turned to Marcus Aurelius, writing to a former student that: “I would give a new cent to have a really good book on the Stoics. If there is one, lend it to me. I need badly to find one man in history to admire. I am in near peril of turning Christian, and rolling in the mud in an agony of human mortification” (Stevenson 1955: 348). Adams’s choice of Stoicism as the lesser of two evils suggests that, despite Pragmatism’s pervasive influence, intellectuals could still find solace in Stoicism.

In fact, contemporary philosopher Josiah Royce (1855–1916), situated near the edge of Pragmatism, somewhat elides the epistemological distinction between the two philosophies. Royce, who also expresses admiration for early Stoic universalism, finds considerable value in Stoicism’s “practical, and not in its theoretical, aspects as a doctrine of the world. Practically stoicism is the attitude of the man who regards all things with which he deals as necessarily subject to his own reason, whether he can control them physically or not.”<sup>25</sup> This position approximates that of many modern Neostoics and is particularly close to that of John Lachs, who, drawing on his own life’s lessons (“Age clarifies,” he begins), tries to bridge the gap in *Stoic Pragmatism* (Lachs 2012). Lachs makes a plea for tempering Pragmatism’s endless optimism for moral improvement with Stoicism’s demand for emotional preservation through acceptance of present reality, believing that by compromise we could learn to recognize and accept incrementally what is “good enough.” Of course, many Roman Stoics embraced such a position, and Anthony A. Long (2007) recently made a similar case.

### Twentieth-century Stoicism

Royce’s appreciation pointed to the need for a different sort of Stoicism, as Bourne’s historical assault seems to have rung the death knell in the North for Stoicism in its classical formulation. Theologians long considered the Hellenistic period – with its mystery religions, universal philosophies, and Maccabean martyrdom – the divinely directed prolegomenon to Christianity. This association might legitimize Stoicism for believers, but to non-believers, such as Bourne, it acted otherwise. From Emerson through Dewey, Transcendentalists and Pragmatists turned from the anthropomorphic god of the Abrahamic tradition to a universal religious naturalism. Ironically, Stoicism might have largely fit that bill – were it not fatally associated with Christianity. For much of the twentieth century, therefore, American Stoicism served less as a philosophy than a generic description of individual behavior (henceforth indicated by stoicism in the lower case).

In 1923, British novelist D. H. Lawrence, one of the most perceptive critics of early American literature, observed: “The essential American soul is hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer. It has never yet melted” (Lawrence 2003: 65). Lawrence’s cold stoic is born, or perhaps conditioned by events, to be emotionally disengaged. Significantly different is the stoic individual who learns limitations through experience and yet proceeds within those boundaries to live expansively. Thomas T. Barker describes this constructive realism as, “Stoicism in

this sense, while not strictly philosophical, is the spirit of turning disillusioning experience into knowledge: knowledge that signifies an acceptance of reality and acts as a buttress against despair” (Barker 1981: 464).

Lawrence’s own treatment of American literature began with Benjamin Franklin and ended with Walt Whitman. There are many other authors whose writings fall along the continuum bounded on extremes by Lawrence’s and Barker’s stoics. Besides Walker Percy who self-identifies (below), most obvious is Ernest Hemingway.<sup>26</sup> Other candidates include: William Faulkner (MacMillan 1979), Herman Melville, Robert Frost, Saul Bellow (Gérard and Halperin 1958), and, among currently active writers, perhaps most often so described by critics are Larry McMurtry and especially Philip Roth. Well-known characters whose stoic-like resolve transforms an individual story include Atticus Finch in Harper Lee’s civil rights novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and Jack Twist and Ennis del Mar in the sexually transgressive “Brokeback Mountain,” in which author Annie Proulx introduces the men as “rough mannered, rough spoken, inured to the stoic life.” Tom Wolfe’s *A Man in Full* is built on the philosophical conversion of a convict who asks for a spy novel called *The Stoics’ Game*, but mistakenly receives a book of Epictetus’s writings. (*The Stoic*, the final volume of Theodore Dreiser’s *A Trilogy of Desire*, is not obviously referring to the philosophy.)

Painting is a more difficult medium in which to display character development, and Lawrence’s more restrictive psychological impression finds echo in Adam Gopnik’s description of certain artists portraying “stoic American melancholy” (Gopnik 1998). But along a continuum suggesting melancholy mixed with determination fall paintings by Winslow Homer, N. C. Wyeth (one of which plays a symbolically significant role in Wolfe’s *A Man in Full*), Andrew Wyeth, Norman Rockwell, and Edward Hopper. Among photographs, critics often label as stoic Dorothea Lange’s iconic Great Depression picture *Migrant Mother* (1936), as well as many other of her photographs. It would be interesting to explore Depression aesthetics generally for increased stoic representation.

Somewhere between Lawrence’s unmeltable soul and Barker’s constructive realism lies an enormous amount of American cultural production – from the crime novels of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler to the movies of John Ford and Sam Peckinpah. A glance at the list of winners of the Pulitzer Prize in fiction or of Best Picture in the Academy Awards underscores the valorization of a broadly stoic aesthetic in America – most of the authors of books and short stories mentioned in this essay have, in fact, received the Pulitzer Prize. German philosopher Thorsten Botz-Bornstein recently used a more formal Stoicism in interpreting American hip hop (Betz-Bornstein 2010).

As an expression of struggling against the odds, Native Americans especially are described as stoic. This tradition may have begun as early as the eighteenth century, when English narratives portrayed American Indians as stoically enduring torture (Lepore 1998: 3–18). Although in the earlier captivity narratives it is the white prisoner who suffers stoically at the hands of Native Americans (Hartman 1999: 137; Duane 2011: 34), it may be that, once domesticated, Native Americans were seen as demonstrating the same response to their now more powerful tormentors (Slotkin 1973: 235–41; Ellison 1999: 95–9).

To prominent writers, artists, and critics, American Indians continue to be the model of stoic behavior. From Mary Chesnut’s famous Civil War diary (Chesnut 1905: 173), to Chingachgook in James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* (e.g. Wallmann and Wheeler 1999: 52), to Zane Grey, the twentieth century’s bestselling writer of Westerns (who commonly calls his Indians stoic), the literary topos is pervasive. In representational art, Charles M. Russell rendered a Native American as *The Stoic on the Plains* and Joseph Henry Sharp painted *The Stoic* – a Native American walking uphill with quiet determination; Alexander Stirling



Calder, father of the artist who created mobiles, sculpted *Sioux Brave, Our American Stoic*. The Native American subjects of nineteenth-century photographer Edward S. Curtis are consistently characterized as stoic (Gidley 2003: 144; Wernitznig 2003: xvii), while Travis Dewitz recently assembled *Stoic Pride*, a suite of photographs of Native American women. Of Native Americans in film, Robert Baird contrasts “the stereotypically stoic, suffering, silent Indian [with Chief Dan George’s] humor, self-deprecation, and playfulness” (Baird 2006: 162). As if taking that as a cue, Ryan Red Corn developed the Smiling Indians film project, designed to “disrupt the vast archive of images of stoic Indians.”<sup>27</sup> Mark Trahan, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, writes about Native American humor to oppose what he calls the stoic stereotype (Trahan 2000).

Other American non-whites are depicted as psychologically stoic in confronting their position as outsiders within America. Slave narratives, in particular, present stoic-like sentiments of great complexity.<sup>28</sup> But in the visual arts and in literature no other group is so consistently identified with the qualities of restraint and resolve as are Native Americans. A Stoic – upper case – always chooses one’s own way of life, while a stoic – lower case – can be someone whom others label as such. There are a number of strategies white Americans employ to reinforce stereotypes of American Indians (e.g. Eastman 2008). Among those, labeling them stoics – figuratively, as wooden Indians – reinforces their accepting the fate of aboriginal exiles, permanently separated from their natural land.

Below the Mason–Dixon, modern southerners acknowledge a formal philosophical Stoicism. One of the South’s greatest writers, Walker Percy, counted as a family heirloom his copy of the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius and reflected in 1985: “Stoicism is the main southern ethos [...]. All well-educated southern gentlemen knew their Cicero, and their Horace, their Virgil and their Seneca, as well as their Marcus Aurelius” (Gretlund 1998: 78). Yet it is not just the gentlemen who knew their Stoicism, for the equally renowned Eudora Welty may be evoking the same sentiment in “The Optimist’s Daughter,” when the mayor of Mount Salus, Mississippi, pays a deceased judge the high compliment of calling him “this noble Roman” (Gretlund 1994: 292).

But against the background of pro-slavery apologists appealing to Stoic justification, it is possible to appreciate why southerners in the midst of the Civil Rights movement anguished over that heritage. Mississippi poet William Alexander Percy, in his widely read autobiography *Lanterns on the Levee*, regretfully quotes his father as advising him that, while improving society is an obligation, he should foremost “attend to his own soul” (W. A. Percy 1941: 74–5). That was a lesson learned, for, referencing Marcus Aurelius, Percy avers that “virtue is an end in itself [...]. Honor and honesty, compassion and truth are good even if they kill you, for they alone give life its dignity and worth” (W. A. Percy 1941: 313). Percy was uncle and legal guardian to Walker Percy, who in 1956 published a lament over the social conservatism of his land: “When [the southerner] named a city of Corinth, he did not mean Paul’s community.” Rather, he had in mind the Greece of the Stoics (W. Percy 1956). In his 1964 book *Who Speaks for the South?*, James McBride Dabbs, a white southerner who lifelong fought segregation (he is singled out by Martin Luther King Jr in “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), attacked what he called the “Stoic remedy,” by which he meant Stoic individuality and passivity that prevailed over collective Christian moral responsibility and action (Dabbs 1964: 119–29).

Thoreau being his first inspiration in developing a philosophy of civil disobedience (King 1978 [1958]: II 552–3), King echoed Stoic natural law in “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” He argued that his being imprisoned for breaking a law which “conscience tells him is unjust” reflects a higher respect: “An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law” (King 1963: 93). Although certainly not a Stoic (he believed in the existence of evil), King did cite Epictetus for his belief that those who practice non-violence cannot fear death (Ansbro 2000: 99).

## Conclusion

In the United States, with its vast physical expanse, diverse populations, materialism, and (to use David Riesman's term) other-directedness, the American soul may, indeed, be "hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer." At the other end of the continuum there lies a constructive realism that equally exemplifies the American stoic – someone who learns the limitations of life and, by that, endures and even thrives. Lying somewhere between these poles is the quintessential American value of rugged individualism – a phrase Herbert Hoover introduced in a campaign speech in 1928, on the eve of the Great Depression, to explain the success of American capitalism. Rugged individualism usually includes narrow understandings of Emersonian self-reliance and of Stoicism. This selective interpretation of Stoicism is only minimally connected to its classical roots.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to colleagues Mark Cladis, Elliott Gorn, Philip Gould, Kenneth Haynes, and Deak Nabers for sharp criticisms and helpful suggestions.

## Notes

- 1 There is no other practical adjective to describe the land known as the United States, and its use here is not intended to imply that there was no philosophy done in the rest of the Americas.
- 2 Cochran 2011; previous Edwards quotation is cited by Cochran, 629.
- 3 Fiering 1981b: 3; Lee 1988 does not mention Stoicism.
- 4 Cochran 2011: 632; her methodology is challenged by Rowe 2012.
- 5 Richard 1994: 188; and see 277 n. 30.
- 6 Rodgers 1992; the subsequent two decades continues to produce much scholarship on the question.
- 7 See especially Wood 1992; most recently, Knott 2009.
- 8 Bibliography discussed in Richard 1994: 1–11, 234–43.
- 9 Emerson 1971: I 82; II 43; I 206.
- 10 Emerson 1971: III 108 and II 81; cf. IV 91, VI 128.
- 11 "Man Thinking must not be subdued by his instruments. Books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings" (Emerson 1971–2013: I 57).
- 12 "The only thing grief has taught me, is to know how shallow it is [...]. In the death of my son, now more than two years ago, I seem to have lost a beautiful estate, – no more. I cannot get it nearer to me [...]. [I]t does not touch me [... it] leaves no scar" (Emerson 1971–2013: III 28).
- 13 Sacks 2008: xxvii. Jacob Risinger's thesis, "Confirmed Tranquility: Stoicism in Transatlantic Romanticism" (PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2014), includes a treatment of Emerson.
- 14 Journal 1: 26–7, for 7 February 1838 (Thoreau 1981).
- 15 Toby Svoboda, "Thoreau in *Walden*: Epicurean or Stoic?" <<http://www.philosophy.uncc.edu/mlleldrid/SAAP/MSU/GS01.html>>.
- 16 Quotations from Wyatt-Brown 1982: 29, 34, 99–100.
- 17 Cobb 1858: xcvi. Assessment of Cobb in O'Brien 2004: II 964.
- 18 The only pertinent, very brief, discussion is in O'Brien 2004: II 1143.
- 19 "Song of Myself," §20, in Whitman 1947: 41. The bibliography is extensive. The most recent and best Stoic reading is Hutchinson 1989.
- 20 See Bloom 1971; Dickinson's "stoicism" is also alluded to by Delphy (1985: 36) and Becker (1998: 131).
- 21 Richardson 2006: 53–4, 79, 124, 122.
- 22 Henry James reflects Stoicism in his writings, but he spent most of his productive career in England; see most recently Beattie 1979.
- 23 Quotations from Peirce 1931: I Bk 1, ch. 5 §273; Peirce 1898, 1901. Shook 2011 tries to make a stronger connection, but can only suggest that Peirce's religious ethics are "akin" to Stoicism.

- 24 James's student Benjamin Rand, in editing the notebooks of Lord Shaftesbury that drew on the Roman Stoics, probably overemphasized Shaftesbury's interest in the philosophy. See Rand 1900.
- 25 Royce 1919: 178–9. Correcting James's emphasis on the great individual in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Royce (1918: 199–100, 171) emphasized the importance of religious communities, recognizing ancient Stoicism as a precursor to the Pauline community.
- 26 Backman 1979: 115–33, at 115.
- 27 Red Corn's stoic explanation is no longer an active link, but his work is at Indian Country, Today Media Network.com, <<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/03/07/ryan-red-corn-explains-smiling-indians-21497>>.
- 28 Most recently, Boulukos 2008: 67–8, following the interpretation of Ellison (above).

## Further reading

For Stoicism in republican America, Julie Ellison's somewhat controversial *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) is an important starting point. The best Pragmatic critique of Stoicism, and an often overlooked work, is Randolph S. Bourne's "Stoicism," *Open Court* 27 (1913): 364–71. Studies of Stoicism in American literature are often disappointing, but the best resource is Duane J. MacMillan (ed.), *The Stoic Strain in American Literature: Essays in Honor of Marston LaFrance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

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## 24

# STOIC THEMES IN CONTEMPORARY ANGLO-AMERICAN ETHICS

*Christopher Gill*

This chapter discusses the impact of Stoicism in British and American writings on ethics from the end of the Second World War to the present day. The discussion deals with two, partly overlapping, areas: ethical philosophy (especially on virtue ethics, the theory of happiness and ethical psychology) and practical ethics. The main focus is on independent works of philosophy or writings addressed to a broad audience rather than specialist scholarship on Stoic ethics, although relevant features of scholarship are also noted. The chapter combines detailed discussion of certain, especially important studies with more generalized comments on trends in the period.

### **Ethical theory**

A marked feature of this period has been the re-emergence of approaches prominent in ancient (Greek and Roman) ethical writing but de-emphasized or avoided in much recent moral philosophy. Ethical questions are being framed again in terms of virtue and happiness, and renewed attention is being given to ethical psychology, including the study of emotions. The revival of such approaches was advocated by certain leading thinkers, notably Elizabeth Anscombe (1958), Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) and Bernard Williams (1985). As a result, “virtue ethics,” as it tends to be called, has become a standard mode of English-language philosophical writing, alongside the more well-established approaches of Kantian-style deontology and utilitarianism (Gill 2004a, 2005: 1–7).

The main ancient beneficiary of this development has been Aristotle, whose ethical writings tend to be taken as the standard early paradigm of virtue ethics (e.g. by Hursthouse 1999), following MacIntyre’s (1981) identification of Aristotle as a desirable alternative to modern styles of ethical theory. The choice of Aristotle for this role, rather than Stoicism, might seem in some ways rather surprising. By contrast with Aristotelian ethics, Stoicism, with its strong thesis of the sufficiency of virtue for happiness, might seem more readily recognizable as a *moral* theory in modern terms. Other distinctive Stoic features cognate to modern moral attitudes include the avoidance of the Platonic–Aristotelian debate about the rival merits of the practical and contemplative lives and the presentation of other-benefiting motivation as a primary human drive (on Aristotle and the Stoics, considered in relationship to Kantian

theory, see Engstrom and Whiting 1996). Also, in more specialized scholarship on ancient ethics (e.g. Annas 1993), Stoic ethical theory has been for some time treated as the principal alternative to the Aristotelian approach. However, the philosophical studies discussed here represent exceptions to the general tendency to focus on Aristotle, although their close attention to Stoicism is sometimes combined with a continuing preference for the Aristotelian standpoint (though with varying views about what constitutes that standpoint).

One of the most striking contributions of this kind is Lawrence Becker's *A New Stoicism* (Becker 1998). This is neither a free-standing work of moral philosophy nor one of scholarly exegesis but has an intermediate status. It is an independent restatement and defense of Stoic ethics, more precisely of key themes in Stoic ethics, conceived from the intellectual standpoint of the late twentieth century. Becker assumes that we can no longer accept the credibility of the Stoic providential worldview or the idea that ethics is in some sense grounded on this worldview. He proposes that the Stoic ideal of "following nature" should be reinterpreted to mean "follow the facts," meaning the facts about human psychology and development as we understand them now.

However, his most distinctive and substantial claim is that the core normative principles of Stoic ethics follow from well-grounded practical reasoning about how to live best. If we reflect on our lives as a whole, and work out "all-things-considered" views of what will go best for us as agents and as sociable human beings, we will arrive independently at central Stoic themes. We will recognize, for instance, that our agency is best expressed in adopting "motivated norms" which are those presented by Stoics as the outcomes of personal and social *oikeiôsis* (development conceived as "appropriation" or "familiarization") (56–9). We will come to see virtue as the best possible structure or perfection of our agency, put differently, as "ideal agency." Pursuing this line of practical reflection will show us why Stoics think that virtue is the only good or, as Becker puts it, as uniquely and unconditionally a good and also incommensurable with other goods (120–2). He also argues, though more briefly, that we can recognize why, for the Stoics, virtue is sufficient, as well as necessary, for happiness, by reflecting on the completeness, control and stability of the virtuous life, as well as its scope for enduring hardship and for producing joy (ch. 7). The overall claim is that we have "internal reasons" (cf. Williams 1981: 101–13), which depend on our own views as agents about what is best, for adopting the ethical framework and form of life recommended by Stoicism. This framework does not require the external support supposedly offered for the ancient Stoics by reference to cosmic nature.

To what extent is Becker's Stoicism recognizable as the kind of Stoicism presented by current specialist scholarship? On certain points he is, explicitly, charting a different path. He sets aside the linkage between ethics and (the ancient Stoic) worldview. Also, although Stoics presented logic and ethics as mutually supporting, there is no ancient equivalent for Becker's use of sustained logical argument to show that Stoic ethical principles emerge as an outcome of all-things-considered practical reasoning (Becker 1998: ch. 4 and appendix). On a number of points, Becker adopts what might seem a "soft" or modified version of Stoic claims. For instance, on emotions, he allows a wider range of responses than any ancient Stoic would, going beyond the "good emotions" (*eupatheiai*) presented as characteristic of the wise person (97–8, 131–2). He maintains that the happy life contains not only virtue but pleasures in a conventional sense, which he calls "non-agency goods" (140–1). He argues that Stoicism validates personal attachments that are deeper and more emotionally engaged than is usually supposed (97–8). Taking all these points together, one might be inclined to see Becker as adopting a substantially different ethical theory from Stoicism, as normally understood by scholars of ancient philosophy. His account might seem to be a generic modern version of virtue ethics or eudaimonism rather than of Stoicism.



However, that judgment would probably go too far. Most of the principles Becker defends in his own way (albeit with some qualifications), such as that virtue is the only good, that it is sufficient for happiness, and that it enables us to surmount external disaster without losing happiness, are core distinctive Stoic claims which other ancient theories, notably that of Aristotle, would not accept. Also, on several of the points on which Becker seems to adopt a modified version of Stoic claims, there are at least partial parallels in specialist scholarship. For instance, a recent full-length study of Stoic emotions, by Margaret Graver (2007), accentuates the scope for positive emotions, pleasurable pastimes and personal attachments in the life of the ideal wise person (51–60, 145–8, 178–82). Gretchen Reydam-Schils (2005), focusing on the Roman Stoics (whom Becker ignores as supposedly atypical), explores Stoic thinking on valid forms of engagement in family life, friendship and political life. She also shows how these ideas reflect orthodox Stoic theory on the social (other-benefiting) strand in ethical development, which Becker also emphasizes (74–6, 99–100). She also draws attention to the interconnections in Stoic thought between personal and social development (Reydam-Schils 2005: ch. 2).

However, the most striking point of convergence between Becker and (some) recent scholarship consists in his setting aside the idea that Stoic ethics depends directly on the Stoic providential worldview. Here, Becker's approach intersects with a major, and still continuing, debate within Stoic scholarship. Two important studies of the 1990s (to which Becker refers; Becker 1998: 70–6) anticipate Becker in grounding Stoic ethics on the reflection of the ethical agent about what constitutes the best life overall, rather than on taking the cosmos as a normative ideal. Both studies focus on Stoic thinking on ethical development conceived as "appropriation" (*oikeiôsis*), particularly as presented by Cicero (*Fin.* 3.17–22, 62–8). Engberg-Pedersen has a book-length treatment of this topic (Engberg-Pedersen 1990), which is also discussed fully in Julia Annas's broader analysis of Aristotelian and Hellenistic ethics (Annas 1993: 159–79, 262–76). Both scholars suggest that in Stoic thinking the key feature in ethical development (coming to see virtue as the only good) is best explained by reference to the agent's progressive self-understanding. Crucially, the agent comes to understand herself *as rational* and to see rationality (in a normative, moral sense) as having an overriding force. They present this analysis of moral motivation as comparable with Kant's, but also as firmly built into the Stoic account of development (Engberg-Pedersen 1990: 84–7, 100–15; Annas 1993: 168–72). Annas also acknowledges the ethical significance of the Stoic worldview, but only as confirming a mode of self-understanding that is already provided by ethical enquiry, and which leads the agent to see this self-understanding *as natural* (Annas 1993: 159–66). In this respect, both studies, like Becker's (1998), present ethics as based on the agent's "internal reasons," that is, her reflection on the best life overall, rather than on external, world-guided, considerations.

This approach to Stoic ethics has remained highly controversial; and it is more common for scholars to give more weight to the role of cosmic nature, both as a factor in ethical development and in grounding the ethical system. A representative statement of that view is offered by Gisela Striker (1996). For her, the crucial move is realizing that ethical development consists in the emergence of order and rationality in one's own life, and seeing that this reflects the order and rationality in the natural universe. It consists also in recognizing that the emergence of this order in one's own life is an expression of nature's providential care, which the agent is motivated to embody in her actions and life (Striker 1996: 225–31). Although this, more cosmic, approach to Stoic ethics remains dominant in scholarship, it raises certain questions which have not been wholly answered. If cosmic ethics has the significance ascribed to it in this interpretation, why is this not made explicit in, at least, one key source for the

theory: Cicero, *On Ends* 3.17–22? Also, how does it come about, exactly, that reference to the nature of the universe becomes, for any given agent, a motivating factor in shaping her life, and thus, an “internal reason” (see further Gill 2004b: 101–11; 2006: 145–50, 157–9)? A further suggestion made in some recent scholarship is that we may be mistaken in looking for *one*, systematic Stoic approach to this topic, whether cosmic or agent-centered, and that different Stoic writers may well have evolved different approaches, while retaining core Stoic ethical principles (Annas 2007; Inwood 2009). The existence of this continuing debate within scholarship on Stoicism provides an informative background for Becker’s philosophical study and indicates that his move of setting aside the role of cosmic nature is less unorthodox than it might seem at first sight.

A more recent contribution to the debate on ancient paradigms for modern ethical theory is Daniel Russell’s *Happiness for Humans* (2012). Russell’s background is in ancient philosophy, and at its core this study is a new analysis of a key debate in Hellenistic–Roman ethical theory. However, his account is also presented as a contribution to the modern philosophy of happiness. The contribution takes three main forms. Russell proposes as the central topic for discussion *eudaimonia*, as understood in ancient ethical theory: that is, as the final goal of practical deliberation, the good life for the agent, and the starting point for thinking about the nature of human fulfillment (Russell 2012: 8). This constitutes, he maintains, a much richer and more coherent conception than is offered by most modern ideas of happiness. Second, he focuses attention on an illuminating ancient debate, centered on the question whether virtue is or is not both necessary and sufficient for happiness (understood as *eudaimonia*). Third, he analyzes this debate in terms of an innovative contrast between embodied and formalistic ideas of the self.

The ancient debate to which Russell refers is played out in Books 3–5 of Cicero’s *On Ends*, between Stoic ethics and a (broadly) Aristotelian ethical position adopted by the first-century BCE Platonic thinker, Antiochus. The key point at issue was whether happiness should be seen as based solely on virtue (so that virtue is both necessary and sufficient for happiness) or whether happiness also requires the possession of external goods, such as health, property and the well-being of one’s family. The Stoics adopted the first view whereas Antiochus argued for a version of the second one: virtue was necessary for happiness whereas complete or perfect happiness also required the possession of at least some external goods. Russell focuses less on the Ciceronian presentation of this debate, and more on the contrast highlighted in this way between the Stoic position (which he sees as partly anticipated by Plato’s Socrates) and the Aristotelian. In Part 2 of his study, he offers a subtle and detailed re-examination of the philosophical strengths and weaknesses of the two positions. Although Russell himself favors a version of the Aristotelian position, he acknowledges fully the internal tensions in Aristotle’s view and the superiority of the Stoic position as regards coherence and self-consistency.

Why does Russell present his account of this ancient discussion as a contribution to *modern* philosophy? Partly this is because he regards it as a “state of the art” debate on a key issue that must arise in any searching examination of happiness (at least, of *eudaimonia*, as understood here). Also, Russell analyzes this debate in terms of a new distinction, which he regards as being of broader significance for modern ethical thought, between an embodied and formalistic conception of self. Both conceptions can be linked with accepting the centrality of virtue for happiness. However, for one view, virtue and happiness are embodied in a particular set of relationships, for instance, with a specific place, way of life, or persons, whereas for the other (formalistic) view, virtue and happiness are detachable from any one (or all) particular relationships. Russell uses this contrast to reanalyze the ancient debate in two main ways. He

suggests that reference to the embodied conception can make sense of an unresolved tension in Aristotle's argument, namely between the valuation of virtue and of external goods. What Aristotle validates, in effect at least, is the expression of virtue and happiness as embodied in particular relationships. This explains his acknowledgement of the vulnerability of human happiness, for instance that of Priam, king of Troy, even in virtuous people.

Stoic ethics, by contrast, is seen by Russell as expressing the (formalistic) view that virtue and happiness are detachable from any specific set of relationships and are to that degree invulnerable. Although this might seem to make the Stoic theory more robust, Russell sees it as problematic in its conception of interpersonal relationships. He acknowledges that the Stoics presented other-benefiting motivation as a fundamental aspect of human nature and saw ethical development as including the progressive unfolding of this motivation. However, he is doubtful that the Stoic advocacy of interpersonal detachment (in Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.24, for instance) is compatible with the full engagement with other people that a convincing ethical theory requires. In that respect, an embodied theory such as Aristotle's is preferable, although it follows that happiness is dependent on external factors and is thus vulnerable to circumstances.

One of the most innovative features of Russell's study is a discussion of grief following bereavement, drawing on recent studies of this topic (ch. 10). A striking finding is that, contrary to what one might have expected, those who have had strong and close relationships are best able to cope with bereavement. Among other factors, they are able to maintain a continuing bond with the dead person as someone who is now absent (Russell 2012: 218–21, 224–5). Russell assumes that this point supports the kind of relationship linked with the embodied conception of happiness (the Aristotelian version), rather than the Stoic (formalistic) one. But one may question whether this is really the case. Russell presupposes that the Stoic view advocates detachment from other people in a way that makes this kind of close bond impossible. Is that right? Arguably, the Stoic ideal is that you should do everything in your power to benefit others, especially your loved ones, as part of the ongoing project of developing virtue, while still retaining awareness that death may separate you from them. On the face of it, this is an attitude that is fully in line with modern findings about coping with bereavement. The relationship involved is close and engaged; but it also gives scope for coming to terms with the other person's death and forming a continuing relationship with the person who has died. Marcus Aurelius offers an illuminating example. Book 1 of his *Meditations* consists of a moving account of a series of people whose lives have embodied qualities whose value he has learnt to appreciate by his relationship with them, including the adoptive father with whom he lived for twenty-three years (1.16; see Gill 2013a: lxxv–lxxxiv, taken with xlix–lii). Virtually all these people are now dead. But Marcus, despite the evident closeness of his relationship to them, has found a positive way to continue the relationship. If Marcus's response represents a consistent expression of Stoic thinking, this may lead us to question Russell's assumption that the Aristotelian (embodied) approach in fact expresses a more well-balanced approach to other people's death than the Stoic formalistic one does.

This topic raises broader questions about the modern reception of Stoic ideas. The idea that Stoic ethics involves an attitude of detachment from other people is a common one in recent discussions and is often presented as a problematic feature of the Stoic theory. However, this interpretation of Stoic theory is open to challenge on a number of grounds. One may question whether the main passage often cited in this connection (Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.24.84–93, better known in shortened form as *Ench.* 3) is actually advocating a systematic program of detachment. Arguably, the message is rather different and more limited: that we should carry forward our ethical projects in life, including those designed to benefit others, in the

knowledge that death may separate us from those we love. This message is still formalistic, in Russell's sense; but whether it is problematic is more open to debate. It is noteworthy too that the charge of advocating detachment from other people was never made against the Stoics in antiquity. This charge was often made against the Epicureans (rightly or wrongly), whereas the Stoics were recognized as validating other-benefiting motivation. Thus, this criticism has emerged as a feature of the modern reception of Stoicism, a point that might need special explanation. A different, but related, point is this. A number of Roman Stoics, at least, are famous for adopting a stance that looks much more like Russell's embodied one. Cato's celebrated suicide to avoid surrendering to a tyrant (Julius Caesar) in 46 BCE and Cicero's (fatal) decision to challenge Mark Antony (made in his most Stoicism-influenced phase in 44–43 BCE) both reflected the judgment that their personal virtue and happiness were inextricably bound up with the constitutional form of the republic, by contrast with monarchical rule. The defiant stances of the so-called "Stoic opposition" under the Roman Empire, though directed against tyrannical behavior rather than imperial rule as such (Griffin 1976: 363–6), can also be seen as expressing an embodied engagement with specific modes of political life. So there is room for questioning whether Russell's suggestive contrast captures what is important in the difference between Aristotelian and Stoic approaches to interpersonal and social or political relationships.

Russell's study is significant in the present context because, unlike much recent work on virtue ethics, it sees Stoicism as a serious competitor to the Aristotelian approach. It thus restores the standing that Stoic ethics had for much of antiquity, the period between the third centuries BCE and the second century CE. Also, it redirects modern attention to what was in many ways the crucial ethical debate in this period of antiquity and to its potential significance for the modern philosophy of happiness. The innovative distinction he offers (between embodied and formalistic conceptions of the self) is also an important contribution, but one that needs closer examination in the assumptions it makes about the Stoic side of the debate.

Martha Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought* (Nussbaum 2001) is different from the work reviewed so far in that its central concern is the psychology of emotions. However, it is also a work of ethical philosophy, though an exceptional one, and one that sits broadly within a eudaimonistic framework. Like Becker and Russell, Nussbaum gives Stoic ideas a central role in her argument, though her attitude to these ideas turns out to be both qualified and ambivalent.

Nussbaum's study constitutes an ambitious, three-part exploration of emotions. The three parts are linked in that each stage of her argument develops the others and also provides support, and a kind of test, for the validity of the other parts. In the first part, she offers what she calls a Neostoic account of emotions, presenting them as cognitive and evaluative responses to experience which shape motivation and intentionality. In the second part she argues that compassion should be central to ethical life, at the interpersonal level and in public policy. This claim depends on her Neostoic account of emotions, and also brings out the implications of that account for ethical theory and for translating this theory into action. The third part focuses on love, especially the idea of the ascent of love, of which she discusses three versions: Platonic, Christian and Romantic. This analysis depends on her view of emotions (love is seen as embodying cognitive discernment) and the three versions of the ascent are also assessed in the light of her valuation of compassion. In fact, while finding each of these versions powerful in some ways, she also criticizes them for attempting to evade what she sees as fundamental facts about human life, and prefers on this ground the more down-to-earth pictures of love offered by Walt Whitman and James Joyce.

Where, more precisely, do Stoic ideas figure in this challenging and wide-ranging study? Nussbaum's starting point in Part 1 is the Stoic theory of emotions, notably the view of emotions as cognitive (in Stoic terms, rational), in that they involve belief and evaluation and are intentional (they shape motivation). She follows the Stoics in rejecting the Platonic-Aristotelian view of emotions as non-rational and the correlated contrast between reason (or thought) and emotion (or appetite/desire), which has been widely influential on many later accounts of emotion. She also highlights the parallels between the Stoic account and modern cognitive theories of the emotions (ch. 1). Nussbaum points out that the cognitive (Neostoic) theory of emotions which she advocates is compatible with at least some recent neurological research on the brain, notably that of Antonio Damasio. Damasio suggests that psychological functions operate in a highly integrated or interconnected way, which lends indirect support to the cognitive or intentional view of emotions (Nussbaum 2001: 114–19). However, in the remainder of Part 1, Nussbaum modifies her initial theory in a series of ways that lead her away, as she underlines, from the original Stoic theory. Based partly on the neurological research just noted, she argues, against the Stoics, that emotions of the kind she describes can also be found in non-human animals such as dogs in a form that shares salient features with human emotions (125–9). She also stresses, as the Stoics did not, the role of different human societies in shaping the kind of emotions we feel and our attitudes towards those emotions (ch. 3). Further, she argues, by contrast to the Stoics, that emotions are found in human children from an early age and (drawing on Freudian insights) that these can influence adult responses in ways that are powerful but often unrecognized. Thus, the Neostoic analysis of emotions that she ends up with is significantly different from the original Stoic one, although it retains the key features (being cognitive, evaluative and intentional) that initially drew her to the Stoic account (230–6).

In the second part of her study, Stoic ideas also play a prominent role, though Nussbaum's stance here is mainly critical. This part is a defense of the idea that compassion should be given a prominent place in our ethical responses to other people, both at an individual and public level. Her account of compassion (321), based partly on Aristotle, has three cognitive dimensions: judgments about size (that a bad event has happened to someone), about non-desert (this person did not deserve this bad event), and a eudaimonistic element (this person is a significant element in my projects and life goals). Nussbaum's view of compassion also depends on several normative beliefs: that we are not self-sufficient and our happiness is bound up with other people and that, in this respect and others, external goods are crucial for our happiness. Our compassion for others is taken to reflect a sympathetic response to other people, individual or collective, who are seen as sharing our neediness and lack of self-sufficiency (12–13, 16, 398–400). She defends her positive valuation of compassion against two kinds of criticism. One is that compassion, because of its emotional (non-rational) character should not be treated as a reliable guide to ethical judgments. The other is that compassion is misguided because it expresses an erroneous picture of human life, namely that our happiness depends on external goods, including the well-being of other people who are important to us (chs 6–7). The Stoics hold both these views; thus, they are taken by Nussbaum as pioneering figures in an anti-compassion tradition (358–86). In the third part of her book, she does not discuss the Stoic theory of love (or *erôs*) (though she has done so in other contexts). But it is clear that she would see the Stoics as strongly opposed to the kind of love she endorses there. This is a love directed at individuals in their unique particularity and expressing a physical and emotional neediness that can only be met by full involvement with the loved person (chs 15–16). So, in the last two parts of her book, Nussbaum decisively rejects the normative theory she sees as characteristically Stoic, despite her endorsement of key features of their psychological conception of emotions.

How does Nussbaum's treatment of Stoic ideas here relate to other lines of contemporary thought and to more specialist scholarship on Stoicism, to which Nussbaum has herself contributed in other publications? A notable feature of her book is her stress on the similarity between the Stoic theory of emotions and modern cognitive approaches, and its compatibility with (at least some) neurological research (chs 1–2). The emergence of these features in modern thought may be a background factor in promoting a more positive appraisal of the psychological credibility of the Stoic theory in scholarship on ancient philosophy. A number of recent treatments, like that of Nussbaum (2001), present the Stoic theory as offering a unified or holistic account of emotions, rather than a narrowly intellectualist one (Gill 2006: 75–9, 246–8; Graver 2007: chs 1–2).

Nussbaum's critical stance towards Stoicism because of its anti-compassion approach is more specific to this study, although there are links both with Nussbaum's earlier work and with some other strands in modern philosophy and scholarship on Stoicism. The debate on compassion in Part 2 of her book reflects a persisting theme of her work, going back to a well-known earlier study of the "fragility of goodness" (Nussbaum 1986). Core elements in this approach are the belief that human happiness depends, in important ways, on external goods and on a close, physically and emotionally engaged, relationship with another person which expresses one's own unique particularity and that of the other person. Nussbaum also emphasizes that happiness, on this view, is vulnerable to circumstances, and that human beings are, fundamentally, not self-sufficient. She contrasts this conception of happiness with other ideals which, as she sees it, express an aspiration to move from a human to a divine perspective or to adopt an ideal of self-sufficiency and invulnerability to circumstances. In her earlier work, and also sometimes here, Nussbaum identifies this contrast with that between (broadly) Aristotelian and Platonic ideals of happiness (Nussbaum 1986: ch. 1; 2001: ch. 10), though in chapter 7 Stoicism and its successors take the place of the Platonic ideal. The position Nussbaum favors has also been influenced, over the years, by Bernard Williams, especially in his stress on the importance of "moral luck" (Williams 1981: ch. 2), and Amartya Sen, who underlines the importance of external goods in other-benefiting actions and attitudes in his work on welfare economics and foreign aid. The debate between competing ideals that Nussbaum sets up also resembles Russell's (2012) contrast between embodied and formalistic conceptions of happiness. Her criticism of Stoic ethical thought in this respect is paralleled especially in Richard Sorabji's work, which also sometimes dissents from Stoic detachment from other people and which endorses the idea that our happiness is, fundamentally, vulnerable especially to bereavement and the loss of those we love (Sorabji 2000: 169–73, 181).

How effective and well-grounded is Nussbaum's critique of Stoic ethics for its anti-compassion stance in this study? We need to note, first, that her response is not just to Stoicism but to what she presents as an anti-compassion tradition, influenced by Stoicism, but including Kant and (perhaps more surprisingly) Nietzsche (Nussbaum 2001: 356–85). Her discussion of Stoic ideas in this part of her study is highly generalized. The only text she engages with in any depth is Seneca's *De clementia* (*On Mercy*) (Nussbaum 2001: 362, 365–6), which, as is shown in a subsequent study by Susanna Braund (2009), is shaped as much by political as by philosophical considerations. Nussbaum's critique is, characteristically, forceful, lucid and suggestive. However, some of her claims can be challenged. For instance, she does not register fully the fact that the Stoic claim is that *virtue* is self-sufficient, not that we, as individuals or selves, should aim at self-sufficiency. (A similar criticism could be made about Russell's (2012) presentation of the ancient debate about happiness.) A related point is that Stoic virtue is, in part, other-benefiting, and that Stoics present the desire to benefit others of our kind as a primary human motive, alongside the motive to benefit ourselves. Hence the virtue whose sufficiency for

happiness Stoicism stresses is crucially expressed in other-benefiting motives and actions, a dimension of Stoic virtue Nussbaum does not emphasize here.

One aspect of Stoic thinking on other-benefiting motivation that she has accentuated elsewhere is their belief that other-benefiting concern can and should be extended, in principle, to any given human being, not just members of one's own family or community (noted briefly in Nussbaum 2001: 359–60, 388–9). As Nussbaum herself has underlined (Nussbaum 1997), this is a strand of Stoic thought, exceptional in the ancient world, which resonates strongly with modern ideas about the universality of ethical principles and concerns. A further dimension of Stoic thought relevant to this question is the exploration of the interface between the personal and social sides of ethical development (understood as “appropriation”). This is an aspect of Stoic thought that has been brought out by more recent work, especially based on Roman-period Stoic writings in practical ethics (Reydams-Schils 2005: ch. 2; Gill 2013a: xlii–iii). To put the point differently, this aspect of Stoic thought stresses that our relationships to other people, at the individual and communal level, should express our core ethical convictions and understanding as well as informing these. It remains true that, even if all these points are taken into account, there is a substantial gap between Nussbaum's conception of human happiness and that found in Stoicism. However, arguably, Stoicism offers a more substantial and credible theory of interpersonal ethics than Nussbaum suggests in her critique of the anti-compassion tradition.

### Practical ethics

A second area in which Stoicism has figured prominently in this period is practical ethics. As in ethical theory, the reception of Stoicism can usefully be placed in a broader context. In the early part of this period, the academic study of ethics (like other branches of philosophy) in Britain and the USA tended to adopt an analytic approach and style which was strongly influenced by philosophical logic and study of language (what Bernard Williams 1985: ch. 7 calls “the linguistic turn”). For instance P. H. Nowell-Smith's *Ethics* (Nowell-Smith 1954) explicitly took as its goal the study of *the language* of ethics, and avoided any kind of first-order ethical judgments (cf. Hare 1952). Although the study of ethics as a purely theoretical enquiry remains the dominant academic pattern, whether couched in analytic or other philosophical idioms, there has also been a gradual increase in more engaged modes of philosophy. One aspect of this is applied ethics, that is, the deployment of normative themes and criteria, often drawn from a number of theoretical approaches, to issues arising in specific professional areas, such as medicine, business or law. Another aspect, not identical with the first (but perhaps not easy to distinguish from it) is the study of the practical implications of a specific philosophical approach or theory. Shifts in styles of academic philosophy have been accompanied by an upsurge of more popular, or professional, publications in these areas. The factors influencing this development are quite complex; but they include the revival within academic philosophy of virtue ethics and the theory of happiness, and the greater prominence given in this approach to the perspective of the agent and to topics such as ethical character, emotions, and life goals that cannot be adequately treated in the more abstract, or third-personal, idiom of much analytic moral philosophy.

This shift has created a climate favorable for renewed attention to ancient philosophy. From at least Socrates onwards, and especially in Hellenistic and Roman thought, specific thinkers or movements were typically seen as embodying a specific mode of life or as recommending attitudes or actions that were intended to form an integral part of the way of life of any given person. In the current revival of practical ethics (in partial contrast to the

revival of virtue ethics, where Aristotle has been the dominant figure), Stoicism has figured prominently. This is partly because a large proportion of our surviving ancient source material for Stoic ethics consists in teachings and writings, for instance, by Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, that modern readers can readily recognize as falling into the area we characterize as practical ethics.

An important strand in this process has consisted of academic studies of Stoicism, or Hellenistic–Roman thought more generally, as modes of psychological therapy or guidance for life. The main concern has been with the way that philosophy fulfilled these functions in the ancient context; however, this has sometimes been linked, explicitly or implicitly, with the idea that modern readers might use ancient ideas or practices for the same purpose. Although written by scholars, these books have often been couched in an accessible idiom, and some of them have had a reception that goes well beyond a scholarly audience. French writers Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault, whose works have been translated into English, have been especially influential (discussed more fully by Bénatouil in this volume, Chapter 25). Hadot focused especially on Stoic writings in practical ethics by Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius: Foucault treated them in a more generalized fashion as part of his review of forms of life guidance in the early Empire. Hadot was especially struck by the analogy between Stoic ethical advice and the meditative practices of medieval Christianity. He analyzed key Stoic themes as types of “spiritual exercise” (like those of St Ignatius of Loyola), and charted the teachings of Epictetus and Marcus’s *Meditations* in terms of three types of exercise or discipline (Hadot 1981, 1995, 1998). Foucault discussed these Stoic writings as part of what he sees as a pervasive concern with the “care (or cultivation) of oneself” in early imperial Rome (Foucault 1984; trans., 1988). Although Foucault’s main interest was in the history of sexuality in antiquity, to which the Stoics had rather little to contribute, his accentuation in Stoic writings of attention to oneself (in various senses) has been influential.

Slightly later, leading English-language scholars of ancient philosophy examined Stoic modes of psychological therapy and life guidance. For instance, Martha Nussbaum did so as part of a wide-ranging review of Hellenistic and Roman approaches to the therapy of emotions (Nussbaum 1994). Richard Sorabji (2000) focused more closely on Stoic psychological therapy, in its various forms; but he also compared this with other ancient styles of therapy, and with early Christian thought on emotions and their management. A. A. Long (2002) showed how Epictetus, as recorded by Arrian, deployed a distinctive combination of teaching methods and recurrent philosophical themes to make Stoic life guidance forceful and penetrating. Also, the recent discovery of a new (and partly Stoic-style) work on psychological therapy, *Avoiding Distress*, by the second-century CE medical writer Galen, has attracted attention to the interface between medical and philosophical thinking about the management of emotions (Gill 2010: chs 5–6; 2013b). These studies, like those of Hadot and Foucault, were primarily concerned to show how the Stoics and other thinkers set out to offer in their own culture what we would characterize as psychotherapy and life guidance. However, by bringing out salient Stoic themes and modes, and by presenting these in a generally accessible and non-technical idiom, they have also provided material for those wanting to draw on Stoic teaching for contemporary purposes.

Running parallel to these academic studies have been writings aimed at a wide audience on Stoic ethics as a basis for living a good life under modern conditions. These have taken two main forms, sometimes combined: autobiographical, biographical or fictional reports of lives which have been improved by applying Stoic principles and books recommending Stoic ethics as a source of life-guidance. A striking example of the first type is Jim Stockdale’s personal account (Stockdale 1995) of how his earlier study of the precepts of Epictetus



enabled him to withstand seven years of imprisonment and torture during the Vietnam War. Crucial for Stockdale's survival was taking seriously Epictetus's reiterated distinction between what is and is not "up to us" as agents. For instance, this helped him to advise his fellow prisoners (he was the senior POW in the camp) about what they should or should not reveal under torture. This enabled them to retain their self-respect and a sense that they were acting properly as regards what was "up to them" (Sorabji 2000: 225–7), and thus continue to defy their captors.

Stockdale's example helped to inspire Tom Wolfe's (rather ironical) novel *A Man in Full* (Wolfe 1998), about a life changed by Stoicism. Wolfe's central figure is helped to escape from a moral impasse by recognizing the importance of Epictetus's dictum that, if we place the wrong kind of value on external goods, we enslave ourselves and that if we want to regain control of our power of choice (*prohairesis*), we have to change our beliefs about value. This enables Wolfe's figure to resist blackmail by his creditors, to see the emptiness of his previous life of wealth and pretentiousness and to become an advocate of Stoicism (cf. Long 2002: 269–70; Russell 2012: 238–40). A third example is Richard Sorabji's exploration of the relationship between Gandhi and the Stoics (Sorabji 2012). This case is unusual in that Gandhi was not, in a straightforward sense, influenced by Stoicism (though he did read a book on Stoic ethics while imprisoned in the early 1920s). His personal philosophy was based on a highly selective response to Socrates, Tolstoy and the New Testament, alongside Indian influences especially Hindu religion. What Sorabji explores are striking analogies, as he sees it, between the principled positions Gandhi adopted during his campaign of non-violent protest against British rule and those of Stoicism. These include a (seemingly paradoxical) combination of emotional detachment with intense engagement with humanitarian and political causes and of a strongly inner and individually developed idealism with total commitment to universal rights and duties. This is a study of the value and cost of trying to put into practice (partly) Stoic-style principles in the twentieth century, even if Gandhi himself did not conceive his life in those terms.

The benefits of Stoic ethics in the contemporary military context, the subject of Stockdale's writings, are explored in a different way in Nancy Sherman's *Stoic Warriors* (Sherman 2005). This book stems from a two-year period during which Sherman, a scholar of ancient and modern ethical philosophy, lectured and advised on ethics at the US Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland. Her book offers, in part, accounts of real-life cases where individuals were helped to cope with the challenges of combat, injury or re-entry to civilian life by adopting Stoic-style attitudes and behaviors, consciously or unconsciously. She also offers more generalized reflections on the extent to which Stoic, or other ancient philosophical, principles can provide a theoretical framework which is applicable for the ethical challenges and dilemmas encountered by soldiers, male and female, in contemporary warfare. The discussion ranges over physical training; military decorum; the management of the emotions of anger, fear and grief; and the importance of interpersonal bonding and a sense of community. Some features of Sherman's study are considered further shortly.

The project of putting Stoic ethics into practice has also figured as a significant part of the (now extensive) "guide to life" or "search for happiness" movement, operating through books, organizations, websites and other media, all of them aimed at a broad, non-specialist audience. Three recent examples are worth noting here. William Irvine, *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* (Irvine 2009) offers a personal and selective presentation of Stoic ethics designed to offer guidance on how it can be put into practice under modern conditions. Jules Evans, *Philosophy for Life and Other Dangerous Situations* (Evans 2012), reviews key principles of ethical guidance from a range of ancient philosophies, including Stoic

writings on practical ethics, as well as discussing real-life cases of philosophical influence and his personal experience of philosophy as a source of emotional strength. Donald Robertson, in *Stoicism and the Art of Happiness* (Robertson 2013), in the Teach Yourself series, offers a practical guide to Stoic ethics, with exercises and advice, though one closely based on Stoic texts and recent scholarship. Robertson, in this volume (Chapter 26), discusses a parallel process to the one considered here, the incorporation of Stoic principles, especially those of Epictetus, into cognitive and behavioral psychotherapy, of which he is a practitioner. Robertson and Evans, along with John Sellars, myself and others, are currently involved in a collaborative project, *Stoicism Today*, designed both to enable people to use Stoicism as a basis for life guidance and psychotherapy and to reflect on the broader practical and theoretical questions raised by this process.<sup>1</sup>

I close this survey of Stoic ethics and contemporary practice by considering briefly two such broad questions, which are raised by the books noted here and others of this kind. One is the question of eclecticism. If philosophy is being used, or recommended, for practical guidance, does it matter whether the advice is based on a single philosophical theory or a combination of theories? This question arises, for instance, in connection with Sherman (2005). Although her study is called *Stoic Warriors* and gives Stoic ethical principles a prominent place, she advocates what she presents as a softened or moderate version of Stoicism, and at several points explicitly recommends an Aristotelian rather than Stoic approach to emotions (Sherman 2005: 67–8, 89, 98, 118). Is this problematic, at the theoretical or practical level? Arguably, it is not. At the theoretical level, Sherman is wholly explicit about her procedure, which is, in any case, based on a considered scholarly judgment about the respective merits of the theories involved. At the practical level, one might say, what matters is whether the advice is helpful to the person concerned in her specific situation, regardless of whether or not the advice is based on a single theory. However, the opposing case can also be made, on both theoretical and practical grounds. One might argue that, to gain the best possible benefit from a given philosophical approach, one needs to draw on it in a sustained and consistent way, bringing out the underlying (and perhaps not immediately obvious) interconnections within the theory, which may be important for its effectiveness in application. In the case of Stoic ethics, for instance, the achievement of resilience and equanimity in situations of crisis may *depend* on taking seriously the Stoic challenge to the conventional beliefs which underlie the emotions of anger, fear or grief. An eclectic approach, it could be argued, runs the risk of pre-empting a reflective response to Stoicism which might be needed to maximize the psychological benefit of the theory as well as to do it full justice at the philosophical level.

A related question is this: how much is enough? How much of a given philosophical theory needs to be considered, or accepted, before we can gain the full practical benefit from its characteristic forms of advice? This question arises in a particularly forceful way in Stoicism, since it was presented in antiquity, and is generally regarded by scholars, as an exceptionally unified and coherent theory. On the one hand, ethical principles, including those relating to human psychology, were presented as constituting an interconnected set of ideas. On the other hand, Stoic ethics was presented, at least sometimes, as linked with, and in some sense supported by, Stoic logic (which included what we would consider ontology and epistemology) and physics or the study of nature as a whole. Hence, the practical ethical advice offered by Stoicism can be seen as presupposing – and depending on – ideas drawn from other branches of theory, a feature which is indeed evident in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, for instance. This characteristic of Stoicism might lead us to raise questions about the procedure adopted by Nussbaum and Sorabji, for instance. Both scholars have strong reservations about the core Stoic claims about value and the Stoic advocacy of extirpation of (most) emotions (Nussbaum

2001: 11–12; Sorabji 2000: 173, 181). But Nussbaum explicitly adopts the Stoic (cognitive) approach to the psychology of emotions, at least in modified form. Also, Sorabji, despite his reservations at the theoretical level, thinks that specific types of Stoic advice may be effective in managing our emotions. However, as in the case of the eclectic approach, one might question how tenable this selective approach is, in the case of Stoicism at least, both at the theoretical and practical level. Arguably, the selectivity might be taken as pre-empting the study of interconnections within the theory that may in turn provide the basis for bringing out the effectiveness of its practical advice.

These are just two of the questions that may arise in connection with the use of Stoic therapy and advice under modern conditions. However, the fact that these questions arise, and that they are prompted by significant recent studies by major scholars, is a clear indication that Stoicism is being taken seriously again for this purpose in modern English-speaking culture.

### Note

- 1 See *Stoicism Today: Ancient Stoic Philosophy for Modern Living* [blog], <<http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/stoicismtoday/>>.

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## 25

# STOICISM AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY FRENCH PHILOSOPHY

*Thomas Bénatouïl*

When considering the imprint of Stoicism on contemporary French philosophy, there is a great temptation to focus on two quite recent and very famous cases, namely Deleuze and Foucault, and to enter into a close discussion with the already substantial literature devoted to the few texts where they dealt with Stoicism.<sup>1</sup> This chapter adopts a quite different approach: many other philosophers will be studied in the following pages, both in order to broaden the perspective on Stoicism in French thought and to understand better Deleuze's and Foucault's respective contributions by putting them into the relevant intellectual contexts.

One of these contexts consists in the works about Stoicism written by French historians of philosophy. When dealing with a doctrine such as Stoicism, which is preserved mainly in Greek and Latin fragments and testimonies, philosophers are likely to be dependent on historians of ancient philosophy. But this is not the main reason to take them into account. It is crucial to remember that the distinction between history of philosophy and philosophy has probably been much more blurry in France since the second half of nineteenth century than in many other countries or periods, as witnessed by the number of influential philosophers (such as Ravaisson, Boutroux, Brunschvicg, Deleuze or Derrida) who wrote a thesis, taught courses and sometimes even published books about past philosophers. Conversely, most historians of ancient philosophy also studied modern authors and were philosophically minded. This is obviously a direct result of the way philosophy was taught in the last year of high school<sup>2</sup> and in universities. There is indeed a distinguished tradition of French scholarship on Stoicism from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, which will not be studied in itself here but which needs to be touched on inasmuch it played a crucial role in non-historical appropriations of this doctrine.

French philosophy in the twentieth century naturally includes many diverse and even rival schools, and authors, which can be interested (or not) in various aspects of Stoicism or have diverging interpretations of them. The reception of Stoicism in the last century in France is as diverse as it was in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. While it sometimes echoes the classical debates raised by Stoicism when it first entered the French philosophical scene with Montaigne, Du Vair, Pascal and Descartes, the lines of fracture specific to the twentieth century should be kept in mind to avoid any illusion of a *perennis philosophia gallica*. As a starting point, one can use a division offered by Foucault of "contemporary philosophy in

France” along “the line that separates a philosophy of experience, of sense and of subject and a philosophy of knowledge, of rationality and of concept. On the one hand, one network is that of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty; and then another is that of Cavaillès, Bachelard and Canguilhem” (Foucault 1978: 1). At first sight, French uses of Stoicism are firmly anchored in the first tradition, as we shall see presently. Foucault himself sided with the second tradition, but might be an apparent exception since he became interested in Stoicism only at the end of his career, when he had moved away from the critical analysis of scientific discourses and was looking for a new approach to truth and subjectivity or the self by delving into Greek and Latin texts.

### Alain: the Stoic discovery of the will

Let us first inquire into this first line of appropriation of Stoic ideas. It seems to have its roots in a specific reading of Stoic epistemology. In various books published around 1930, Émile Chartier (1868–1951), known as Alain, traces back to the Stoics a central position of his which holds that knowledge depends on the will and implies that truth does not lie in a fixed set of ideas about the world (Alain 1927: Bk 8, ch. 7). This position might seem more characteristic of Descartes, who famously stressed the importance of securing a method to guide one’s mind and the role of the will, next to understanding, in finding truths. Alain indeed often uses Cartesian terms to phrase his *volontarisme* and mentions Descartes, and sometimes also his own professor Jules Lagneau (1851–1894) (Alain 1927: Bk 8, ch. 5), as one of his inspirations. Still, Alain goes so far as saying that he discovered the doctrine in the Stoics and found it again later, albeit in more “obscure” terms, in Descartes (Alain 1936: 42–4). This is because his 1891 master’s thesis was devoted to Stoic epistemology (Alain 1964). It is possible that Alain’s reading of this topic was in turn influenced by the spiritualist philosopher-cum-historian of ancient philosophy Félix Ravaisson (1813–1900), who had already interpreted the Stoic notion of assent as meaning that “only the voluntary activity of the soul turns sensation into knowledge” and that “knowledge is judgement” (Ravaisson 1845: 127). Another important historian of ancient philosophy of the time, Victor Brochard (1848–1907), attributes to the Stoics the same position – “to judge or to believe is to will” – in a philosophical essay about belief (Brochard 1884: 16), and adds that this tenet was approved by Descartes, Malebranche and Spinoza and is independent of the problem of the freedom of the will.

Still, Alain takes this interpretation to a new level by basing it on other aspects of Stoic epistemology and giving it a Kantian (as much as Cartesian) flavor. He emphasizes first that “representations” (*phantasiai*) are movements of the ruling part of the soul and thus always imply an activity (rather than only a passive recording of sensory data) of the mind, and second that, while being the criterion of truth, the “cognitive impression” (*phantasia katalēptikē*) is distinct from the “truth” as such, which is equated with “science” (Sextus, *Math.* 7.38–41), namely with a strong and systematic disposition (*diathesis*) of the ruling part of the soul. Alain stresses one consequence of these tenets, which he also repeatedly mentions in his later non-historical works: according to the Stoics, a lunatic yelling in broad daylight that “it is day” has not got hold of any truth. Conversely, the sage never makes any mistake, even when he says something false, because his wisdom or science lies in the “tension” (*tonos*) of his soul and not in any specific proposition he utters (Alain 1964: 17–20, 37).

According to Alain, the Stoics teach us that the constant effort to think aptly, the progress of the mind towards the truth through self-correction is more important than any true beliefs it possesses at a given time. This also has ethical and political consequences. Alain is famous for advocating a radical pacifism and the constant control by all citizens of political and military

powers. In his main work about war, he regularly mentions the Stoics as an inspiration of his own critical analysis. Seneca, he notes, was right against the majority of his contemporaries when he argued that nothing could justify gladiator fights (Alain 1921: ch. 99). Heroic men should be praised, says Alain, but not because of “all their ideas, justice, civilization, motherland, God, hardship, sacrifice,” which he chooses instead to “follow up to their source, in this sole resolution of the will: I don’t care about the Christian, I take only the Stoic into account” including “the deep sadness he wants to hide from me” (Alain 1921: ch. 36). War should therefore be analyzed coldly, as passions pure and simple, about which “the true resource of the most profound philosophy is to see them as they are [...], as the Stoics rightly saw, since, under the ornaments of a captive reason, they are only mechanical movements, immediately judged and despised” (Alain 1921: ch. 13).

### Sartre: is Stoicism compatible with existentialism?

Sartre inherited from Alain his interest in Stoicism. This is most obvious in his diaries from the early months of the Second World War, when he was an idle soldier in the east of France. The *drôle de guerre* led Sartre to question his earlier taste for Stoicism from an existential point of view. The first lines of his diary describe the “Stoic” attitude he claims to adopt towards war, namely an acceptance of the loss of his past life and of his unknown future (Sartre 1995: 19), a “contemplative” resignation, which is not based on a sense of duty (“I lend my body, I serve provided I am left alone”) and was initially inspired but came to be distinct from the “active refusal of the war in the manner of Alain” (Sartre 1995: 68, 86), because the war against Hitler was not the same as the First World War.

The appeal of Stoicism stems from Sartre’s refusal to separate ethics (*la morale*) from metaphysics: he realizes that, since his student years, he has been looking for a “salvation” of a sort, “not in the Christian but in the Stoic sense,” namely a complete self-transformation which would turn one’s nature to a better state from a metaphysical point of view (Sartre 1995: 280; 1992: 557). He thus compares his reading of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* in 1938 to the Athenians’ turning away, after Alexander’s death, from Aristotelian science in favor of “the more violent but more ‘totalitarian’ doctrines of the Stoics and the Epicureans, who taught them how to live” (Sartre 1995: 406). Sartre however suspects that his deeply felt Stoicism might not satisfy his more recent existential requirement for “authenticity,” a Heideggerian notion that is crucial to his own philosophy. The Stoic, Sartre observes, needs to believe the world is good and must secretly admire his situation (in Sartre’s case: the army) to endure it. Stoicism is more of a “psychological defense,” a way of tricking oneself, than an authentic attitude towards life, which seems to require suffering (Sartre 1995: 19–21, 68, 241, 538; Simont 1995).<sup>3</sup> Later, in his ethical notebooks of 1947–48, Sartre will also use Hegel’s famous analysis in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* to criticize Stoicism: “Alain’s solution (which is also Epictetus’s), objective compliance, internal resistance, is a pure illusion” (Sartre 1983: 274). It is a free choice of the slave to escape his condition in the abstract, which is opposed to resignation but just as complicit in the master’s power, as suggested by the fact that Stoicism was invented and most often used by freemen like Seneca or Marcus Aurelius in order to avoid the fear of becoming a slave (Sartre 1983: 79).

Yet, these objections remained unpublished: Stoicism is not criticized in Sartre’s central and systematic philosophical work published in 1943, *Being and Nothingness*, and even appears as a forerunner of existentialism. Sartre credits “Descartes following the Stoics” with naming “freedom” man’s ability to “put himself outside of being” or, more precisely, “this possibility which human reality has to secrete a nothingness which isolates it” (Sartre 1992: 60). This

coupling of Descartes and the Stoics, repeated later in a detailed analysis of freedom (622), is reminiscent of Alain (Sartre 1992: 60). Sartre goes even further than this general acknowledgement when he offers the Stoic notion of things “indifferent” (i.e. neither good nor evil) as an important tool for psychological analysis, which shows how one’s overall and final project cannot account, in any situation, for the choice of one of two practical options, which thus remains entirely free (605).

### Canguilhem against Sartre: ethics as logic

It is against Alain’s and Sartre’s versions of Stoicism as an early champion of the activity and absolute independence of consciousness that a second line of interpretation of Stoicism was discretely elaborated, which paved the way for the more systematic and very different appropriations by Deleuze, Vuillemin or Foucault. Reacting to Sartre’s declaration “I always felt sympathetic to the Stoics” (Sartre 1976: 135), the philosopher of science Georges Canguilhem (1904–95) is said to have remarked: “Me too, but Stoicism does not lie only in reacting with serenity to events established by Zeus, it consists also in constructing and practicing one logic, and one only, in thought and action” (Lautman 2000: 29). What is at stake in this exchange about Stoicism is no small matter and is twofold. First, the requirement to use the same rules and principles in thought and action is very reminiscent of a comment made by the philosopher of mathematics Jean Cavaillès (1903–1944) about his participation in the Resistance movement against the Nazis, which cost him his life. In 1943, he famously declared to Raymond Aron that he was a follower of Spinoza and believed that their fight against the Nazis was as “necessary” as a mathematical proof or the historical development of mathematics. This attitude was explained and celebrated by Canguilhem, himself a *résistant*, in an address honoring his friend Cavaillès in 1969, some lines of which throw light on his disagreement with Sartre about the Stoics (which are mentioned in another similar address as prescribing philosophers “to learn to die”): “Jean Cavaillès embodies the logic of *Résistance* lived as far as death. Many philosophers of existence and personality achieve as much next time, if they can” (Canguilhem 1996: 29, 38, 42). A former student of Canguilhem remembers that he once reacted with anger to students who had manifested their contempt towards Stoicism (around 1969) and said that, when everything is well, no one needs ethics, but when one needs it, Stoicism is the only option (Muglioni 2008).

Not incidentally, Foucault’s division of French philosophy was inspired by Cavaillès through Canguilhem (Cassou-Noguès and Gillot 2009). The former opposed “a philosophy of concept” to phenomenology defined as “a philosophy of consciousness” in his last work (Cavaillès 1947: 90). Canguilhem credited (in 1967) this passage for foreseeing the task of contemporary philosophy, namely “substituting the primacy of concept, system and structure to the primacy of consciousness,” and gave Cavaillès’s life as a refutation of “the existentialist argument of those who try today to discredit what they call structuralism” as leading to a passive attitude towards reality (Canguilhem 1996: 30). Accordingly, Canguilhem seems to have commended Stoicism as a reliable moral compass because it urges us to follow the same necessary rules in theory and practice, in a manner reminiscent of Spinoza. This insistence on the Stoic use of logic contrasts strongly with the definition of Stoicism by such an active will or absolute freedom that it seems incompatible with any logical rules or cosmological boundaries, which are thus demoted to deadly or self-deceiving constraints (Alain 1964: 39; Sartre 1995: 114), in direct contradiction to ancient Stoicism up to Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.



### **Stoicism as a logic of events and a system: Brochard, Bréhier, Goldschmidt, Vuillemin**

How did a different version of Stoicism, substituting the primacy of system to the primacy of consciousness, emerge on the French philosophical scene? To understand this process, one must go back to an earlier debate between historians of philosophy. Victor Brochard argued as early as 1892 against Prantl and Zeller that Stoic dialectic was not a vain and abstruse repetition of Aristotle's syllogistic. Because of their physical tenet that only individuals exist and their claim to consistency, the Stoics constructed a rigorously nominalist logic, giving pride of place to conditional propositions expressing permanent connections between particular facts ("If it is day, there is light") and not universal relationships between concepts ("Every man is mortal"): "the idea of law replaces the idea of essence [...]; the Stoics have kept the idea of an immutable order in which events succeed one another, which was required to make science possible" (Brochard 1926: 226). But how can these necessary laws of nature be known to men? Brochard claimed that the Stoic theory of signs shows that this happens through induction from past experience, which makes Stoic logic akin to John Stuart Mill's. This empiricist interpretation was soon disputed by Octave Hamelin (1856–1907), who acknowledged the originality and systematicity of the Stoics, but saw their logic as based on "the idea of consequence rather than that of law, so much so that they should be compared to Spinoza" (Hamelin 1901: 13). The Stoics held that conditional propositions do not express external connections between brute facts but analytical relationships grasped by reason and ultimately based on their pantheism. This debate, which has not been closed (Gourinat 2000: 223–8), is crucial because it put Stoicism back on the philosophical map as a systematic doctrine, in which logic reflects an original ontology denying the existence of universals.

It is this ontology that a famous 1908 short study by Émile Bréhier (1876–1952) characterizes as "probably the first to notice as such the results of beings acting upon each other, which we call today facts or events" (Bréhier 1928: 12). Bréhier emphasized the distinction between corporeal realities, which are the only beings and causes, and effects which the Stoics held to be "incorporeals" and expressed by verbs. He consequently blamed Stoic dialectic for "remaining on the surface of being" (36) and hardly going beyond the principle of identity, because it had incorporeal "sayables" (*lekta*) and their purely logical connections (irreducible to causality) as its only objects.

While Bréhier later found Stoicism to be more systematic (Goldschmidt 1953: 82), it is above all his pupil Victor Goldschmidt (1914–1981) who brought to light the tight consistency between the parts of the Stoic doctrine, including ethics. This is no coincidence, since he theorized and practiced a "structural method" in the history of philosophy, which claimed to reconstruct each doctrine from the inside, using its own methodological procedures (implicit or explicit) as a blueprint, and thus granting it maximum coherence.<sup>4</sup> Goldschmidt first attempted to practice this method on Plato's dialogues, but he was on much safer ground with Stoicism since the Stoics were the first to use the term "system" about the world and reason, and to claim to offer a completely coherent doctrine (Goldschmidt 1953: 60–7). However Goldschmidt's contribution does not lie so much in his charitable search for the consistency of all Stoic tenets, as in discovering specific "ideas," such as "art," "transition" or "concreteness," which cut across the three parts of philosophy and account for their tight connection from a logical, but also practical, point of view. In his book, he first shows the originality of the Stoic conception of time centered on the present, and then uncovers the crucial role played by this conception in Stoic epistemology and, above all, in ethics (Goldschmidt 1953).<sup>5</sup>

An initially similar approach to Stoicism worth mentioning is Jules Vuillemin's (1920–2001). His first essay, devoted to fate and praised by Goldschmidt, already points to unexpected connections between Stoic logic, the physical doctrine of eternal recurrence, and the theory of time as an incorporeal or between Stoic pantheism and human freedom joined together by the doctrine of fate and thus opposed to any retreat into a serene and solitary *conscience* (Guillermit and Vuillemin 1948: 52–3, 59–60). Vuillemin then practiced the history of German, modern and ancient philosophy in a manner similar to his master Gueroult, but soon brought two important qualifications to the internalist approach typical of the “structural method”: an emphasis on the imprint of scientific theories on philosophical doctrines and a growing willingness to use logic to assess past philosophical arguments, which drew his attention to analytic philosophy at a time when it was hardly known in France. This rare double interest in the history of philosophy (and science) and in logic eventually led Vuillemin to try to construct a classification of all possible philosophical systems on the basis of an analysis of “elementary forms of singular predication”: each system is defined by its selection of one type of predication (or sentence) as fundamental to its ontology (Vuillemin 1986: 115–28). In this scheme, Stoicism is read as an instance of the “nominalism of events,” which, together with the “nominalism of things” (Spinoza), is distinguished from realism (Plato) and conceptualism (Aristotle, Leibniz), all of which belong to the genus of dogmatic systems. While Vuillemin follows his predecessors in seeing Stoicism as defined by its nominalism and its focus on events, his contribution is to break with a long tradition going back to Descartes, which looks down on Stoic logic and physics from the point of view of modern science.<sup>6</sup> Since philosophical systems are unable to provide a complete account of all phenomena or to refute each other, one must choose between them according to various competing “interests of reason” (simplicity, security, ontological richness) and taking into account established scientific theories, which can make one system more plausible than another at a given time (Vuillemin 1986: 132–3). The notion of a physical field, described through wave functions accounting for its various states over time and space, can thus show that a nominalist ontology of events is not obsolete. While former historians of Stoicism gave only divination as an example of the Stoic science of events, Vuillemin adds Posidonius's theory of the lunar periodicity of tides (Strabo, *Geography* 3.5.8), since it shows the parallel evolutions of the movements of the moon and of the ocean over various periods of time (day, month, year), thus establishing a valid, albeit qualitative, wave function (Vuillemin 1984: 322–30).

With Goldschmidt, Vuillemin and their forerunners, Stoic texts thus ceased to be treated only as memorials to the autonomy of judgment and became the ideal materials for a “structural history” of philosophy, which achieved a complete refashioning of Stoicism from a “philosophy of consciousness” to a “philosophy of system” and “rationality.” The previous, experience-centered perspective on Stoicism did not however disappear. A good example of its persistence can be found in Pierre Hadot's (1922–2010) work, which started as a purely historical study of late Stoic and Neoplatonic authors, emphasizing the presence of “spiritual exercises” and not only arguments or concepts in their texts (Hadot 1995: 81–125, first published in 1976), and developed into a general account of ancient philosophy as a “way of life,” which has been of late very well received by philosophers and the general public alike (Hadot 2002, first published in 1995). This account was developed under the influence of Bergson and existentialism and against Gueroult's or Goldschmidt's conception of philosophy as the construction of a theoretical system. Hadot views ancient philosophical doctrines as stemming from a “fundamental choice of life” preceding philosophical discourse, which aims at justifying this “existential choice” (for example a choice of pleasure and personal interest in

Epicureanism or of a rational good transcending the individual in Stoicism) and the way of life to which it leads. Hadot, who devoted an important part of his work to Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, thus applies to the whole of philosophy as it was pursued in Antiquity the existentialist principle of the priority of choice over knowledge, which Sartre traced back to Stoicism.

### Deleuze: the Stoic ontology of sense as event

It is against this rich historical and philosophical background that one can best understand Gilles Deleuze's (1925–1995) famous appropriation of Stoicism in the first part of his *Logic of Sense*, published in 1969, the title of which seems intended to cut across Foucault's (later) phrasing of the division in French philosophy between rationality and sense. Following closely Bréhier (1928), Deleuze characterizes Stoicism as based on a new “distribution imposed on beings and concepts” or “a new frontier drawn” between bodies and causes on the one side, incorporeal effects or events on the other (Deleuze 1969: 15; 1990: 4–7): Stoicism is first and foremost defined by its ontology. Deleuze also emphasizes the solidarity between the three parts of Stoic philosophy in a manner recalling Goldschmidt (whom he quotes about Stoic ethics). In logic, Deleuze credits the Stoics with isolating “sense” as the event which subsists or insists in the proposition and is distinct from its three usual dimensions (the object it refers to, the mental state it expresses, the notions included in its meaning) (Bowden 2011: 24–8). They thus laid the grounds for a new and strange “logic” exploring the compatibilities and incompatibilities of pure events, which are neither causal (necessity) nor formal (identity and contradiction) relationships (Deleuze 1969: 198–9; 1990: 169–70). Deleuze hence turns into a crucial philosophical discovery what Bréhier saw as a flawed insulation of Stoic logic from reality (1928: 36). Stoic ontology also has an ethical counterpart: the Stoic sage wills to incarnate the event, and ethics is aimed at showing us how to be worthy of what happens to us, how not to resent our situation but to transfigure it. Stoic ethics does not consist in opposing the autonomy of our consciousness or will to physical or political constraints, but in grasping and incarnating, like an actor, the eternal event which lies in our situation (Sellars 2006).

This does not mean that ethics and logic are only offshoots of metaphysics, because Stoic ontology is anti-metaphysical and also because it is rather one and the same distinction between depth and surface, causes and effects, bodies and events (or sense), which is expressed in different but parallel ways in the Stoic doctrines of causation, time, language, representation or action. Moreover, Deleuze finds this fundamental principle of Stoicism also illustrated in anecdotes about Stoic philosophers, and even suggests that this abstract principle stems from life itself so much so that one can name after Stoicism “a concrete or poetical way of life” (Deleuze 1969: 174; 1990: 148). Thus Stoicism is not dismembered but read as joining not only physical, logical and ethical tenets into a system, but also theory and practice, a conception of philosophy which Deleuze himself emulated (Beaulieu 2005).

Still, Deleuze does not approach Stoicism as a historian of philosophy in *Logic of Sense*. His aim is not to account for Stoic doctrines as such, but rather to specify a philosophical position about sense as event first put forward by ancient Stoics and to follow and elaborate this position beyond them. Deleuze warns against the “empiricist confusion between event and accident” and the “dogmatic confusion between event and essence” (Deleuze 1969: 69; 1990: 54) – which happen to match Brochard's and Hamelin's interpretations of Stoic logic – but thinks the Stoics themselves did not resist the temptation to reduce the connection between events to causality or contradiction: one has to follow Leibniz to understand “logical incompatibilities” (Deleuze 1969: 200; 1990: 172–3; 1993: 53).<sup>7</sup> Like Leibniz but to a lesser

extent, Gregory of Rimini, Nicholas of Autrecourt, Lewis Carroll, Meinong, Husserl, Joë Bousquet, Paul Valéry and structuralism are also introduced by Deleuze as having “rediscovered the dimension of sense” in a different context. Some of these thinkers are just echoes, others betrayed their Stoic inspiration, and some developed it, correcting or supplementing the Stoics where they failed to see the consequences of their ontology.<sup>8</sup>

Structuralism is especially important in this list since *Logic of Sense* clearly aims to offer a structuralist philosophy of a sort or, rather, a philosophy of structuralism defined as an account of sense as the effect of an impersonal or pre-individual transcendental field (Bowden 2011: 152–84) and opposed chiefly to phenomenology, including Sartre (Deleuze 1969: 128; 1990: 105). Hence, while Deleuze’s Stoicism is not a “philosophy of consciousness” (unlike Hegel’s and Sartre’s; see Simont 1995), it is above all a philosophy of “sense”, and while it is a philosophy of “structure,” it is not a “philosophy of rationality” (unlike Canguilhem’s or Vuillemin’s), and this strange hybrid, together with Deleuze’s inspired evocations of Stoic physics and ethics, probably explains why his use of Stoicism still appears so original and has stirred debate (Lacan 2001: 403–4, 409; Badiou 2006: 403–10), despite its almost complete disappearance from Deleuze’s later works (Deleuze 1987: 62–6).

### **Foucault: Stoicism as part of the Hellenistic and Roman “culture of the self”**

Surprisingly in view of how well Foucault (1926–1984) knew Deleuze’s book, which he reviewed in 1970 (Foucault 1994: §80), his own late study of Stoicism seems completely different and independent of Deleuze’s perspective. It can be found mainly in his 1981–82 lectures at the Collège de France published in 2001 and in the second and fifth chapters of the third volume of his *History of Sexuality*, published in 1984, and in various texts or lectures of this period (Foucault 1986, 1991, 1993, 2005),<sup>9</sup> Foucault’s approach seems more akin to Hadot’s, whom he quotes several times, than to any of the previous philosophers or historians mentioned above: Foucault studies mainly ethical texts from the imperial period (Seneca, Musonius, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius), hardly mentions any Stoic physical or logical doctrine, and focuses on the notion of the “care of the self.” Accordingly, many early readers felt that, in his last published books about antiquity, Foucault had abandoned his previous critical perspectives centered on discourse and power (Vegetti 1986) and had read into ancient texts modern and “humanist” notions he used to criticize, such as freedom, the subject and self-fashioning (Vegetti 1986; Cambiano 1988; Porter 2005).

To take stock of Foucault’s studies of Roman Stoicism, one needs therefore to understand why his attention was drawn to it. First and foremost, Foucault is not interested in Stoicism *as such*, as shown by his habit of quoting texts from several different philosophical schools in his lectures (Foucault 2005): he is not trying to highlight a specifically Stoic doctrine or notion of the self. He focuses on the first two centuries CE, which he also describes as starting with “Roman Stoicism” (and ending with the apparition of the first important Christian thinkers) and defines as “a genuine golden age in the history of care of the self, that is, of care of the self as a notion, practice, and institution” (Foucault 2001: 79; 2005: 81–2). This approach is very much in line with Foucault’s previous historical works, which claimed to introduce “events” in the history of science and social policy, namely historical discontinuities, in order to uncover successive but heterogeneous modes of thinking. As a “truly general cultural phenomenon,” the “care of the self” is such an “event in thought” (Foucault 2001: 11; 2005: 9).

According to Foucault, this “culture of the self” had a popular or religious side and a learned one, associated with social elites and philosophy. He is conscious that, at this time,

one did not practice or study philosophy in general but opted (as emphasized by Hadot), for a specific school or tradition by choosing a master-teacher who belonged to it. So Foucault is not trying to reconstruct a common doctrine shared by all philosophers of the period. His attention is focused not on tenets or arguments, but on small notions found in various texts (salvation, *askêsis* or exercise, *paraskeuê* or preparation, *meletê* or meditation) and on forms of exercise (scrutinizing one's representations, listening, keeping silent, reading, writing, meditating about evils or death, examining one's conscience). Again, this was very typical of Foucault's method long before he approached ancient philosophical texts. To give but one example, in a 1970 discussion where his studies of eighteenth-century medical texts are debated and opposed to a more philosophical approach to the history of medicine, Foucault answers: "My focus is not on theories and concepts, but on the way in which scientific discourse is practiced. Observe how living beings are actually distinguished from non-living beings. Observe what is analyzed in living beings, what is selected in living beings and turned into a problem for natural history" (Foucault 1994: §77). Similarly, concerning the self, Foucault wants to offer a "history of practices of subjectivity" (Foucault 2001: 13; 2005: 11).

But why delve into this ancient elitist "culture of the self"? While one easily grasps the philosophical and political purpose of Foucault's other historical studies (of madness, medicine, prison or sexuality), the contemporary relevance of his last studies is much more elusive. Foucault is neither a historian of ancient philosophy or culture (like Hadot) nor a philosopher going back to ancient doctrines to fuel his own (like Deleuze). He rather uses history to question our contemporary conception of ourselves as subjects, which is the outcome of a "factitious history that would display a sort of continuous development of knowledge of the self" (Foucault 2001: 442; 2005: 461). Foucault wants to break this false continuity into various and successive "régimes de subjectivation," with their different notions, practices and institutions of the self. He distinguishes three ancient connections between care of the self and knowledge of oneself. The fame of the first two, the Platonic model of reminiscence and the Christian model of exegesis, resulted in the ignorance of a third model, the Hellenistic constitution of the self as a goal to reach (Foucault 2001: 245–8; 2005: 256–9). The first two models are based on the requirement to know oneself, to reach the truth about oneself, which, according to Foucault, was connected to the production of a subjected self (or obeying subject), just like its modern equivalents (Potte-Bonneville 2004: 174–93). Hence, uncovering a different, albeit ancient, articulation of truth and the self is useful to our present and "urgent, fundamental, and politically indispensable task" to constitute "an ethic of the self" as a basis for "resistance to political power" (Foucault 2001: 241; 2005: 252).

### **Foucault, Deleuze and philosophy as a Stoic *art of events***

This agenda explains why Foucault insists so much, and sometimes too much given their common Socratic background, on the differences between the Platonic and the Stoic modalities of the care of the self. This focus is in turn a strong hint that Foucault's interest in Stoicism has a common thread with Deleuze's, despite their very different approaches and choices of Stoic texts. For Deleuze equally stresses Stoic anti-Platonism: Plato pictures the philosopher as ironic and ascending to a position high above the ground, whereas the Stoic philosopher practices humor and wanders on the surface of the world, like Heracles (Deleuze 1969: 152–66; 1990: 127–41). According to Foucault, Platonism amounts to the subordination of the care of the self to a global knowledge of oneself, which requires a conversion to a

transcendent reality: this is the reminiscence model (Foucault 2001: 201–2; 2005: 209–10), which overshadowed the Hellenistic model.

Deleuze and Foucault also insist on this opposition because they have contemporary adversaries that they see as heirs of Platonism, chiefly phenomenology, which leads us back to the philosophical debate between subject and structure. As already noted, Deleuze blames Husserl for betraying the Stoic inspiration and reducing meaning to concept and the transcendental field to consciousness (Deleuze 1969: 117–18; 1990: 96–7). To Foucault, Husserl is a prominent example of someone who views philosophy as a great, continuous and deepening search for self-knowledge (Foucault 2001: 443; 2005: 461). Another, more ambivalent, adversary is psychoanalysis. While Deleuze is not as critical of Freud in *Logic of Sense* as he and Guattari will be a few years later in *Anti-Oedipus*, he already offers to read psychoanalysis in a Stoic and structuralist way as a “science of pure events” by equating phantasms with events and minimizing as irrelevant or uninteresting the search for the causes or the deep meaning of phantasms (Deleuze 1969: 245–7; 1990: 210–12). As for Foucault, psychoanalysis is a crucial, albeit discrete, issue of his historical studies about truth and the self (Foucault 2001: 30–1; 2005: 29–30). This is one of the missing links between these studies and Foucault’s earlier “history of sexuality,” since psychoanalysis was an explicit target as the last phase of the Western search for the “truth of sex” (Foucault 1978).<sup>10</sup> In the same years, Foucault wrote a preface to the English translation of *Anti-Oedipus* and offered to read it “as an ‘art’ in the sense that is conveyed by the term ‘erotic art’ for example,” showing “how desire can and must develop its forces in the political sphere” and thus leading to an “*Ars erotica, ars theoretica, ars politica*” (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: xii).

In his lectures about Hellenistic philosophy, Foucault is similarly offering to read Epicurean or Stoic texts as ancient instances of *ars theoretica* which show that men have not always tried to achieve autonomy through knowledge of themselves. Foucault questions this “scientific” model, on which both psychoanalysis and Marxism still rely, and wants to invent a different type of knowledge that could undermine power in various fields, because he thinks the Platonic and Christian models of self-knowledge and their offshoots are bound to reinforce *subjectivation* as social power. By contrast, according to Foucault, Hellenistic and Roman philosophers do not oppose knowing nature and knowing oneself, as Socrates does in Plato’s *Alcibiades*: they are not looking for the proper object of knowledge but for a proper way of knowing, which delivers rules of conduct and self-transformation and which Foucault calls “spiritual knowledge [*savoir spirituel*]” (Foucault 2001: 295; 2005: 308). According to this model, the care of the self is not subordinate to knowledge of oneself obtained through reminiscence or self-exegesis and does not shy away from the world: “all the objectives of traditional Stoic morality are in fact not only compatible with, but can only really be attained, can only be met and accomplished at the cost of the knowledge of nature that is, at the same time, knowledge of the totality of the world. We can only arrive at the self by having passed through the great cycle of the world” (Foucault 2001: 255; 2005: 266).

Despite the apparent similarity between their perspectives, Hadot criticized Foucault for misinterpreting Stoicism as self-oriented and aesthetical, thus ignoring its ambition to overcome the self and ascend to universal reason (Hadot 1995: 206–12). Given the texts Hadot could read in 1989, his worries were understandable. But, if we take into account the 1981–82 lectures just quoted, we can dismiss Hadot’s charge, since Foucault insists on the tight connection between the Stoic care of the self and knowledge of nature, even using Hadot’s notion of “spiritual exercise” to describe Seneca’s, Epictetus’s or Marcus Aurelius’s various uses of physics or cosmology (Foucault 2001: 278–83; 2005: 289–96). Still, Foucault describes knowledge of the world as a way, or a means, of caring for oneself, whereas Hadot sees it as a

way of transcending the self. One could explain the difference by the fact that Foucault is more concerned with practices than philosophical tenets, but also by Hadot's somewhat Neoplatonic perspective. For Roman Stoics, knowing nature and following reason allows you to get rid of your emotions and subjective biases about the world, but not of your self: you should never lose sense of your individual abilities and duties arising from your nature, social position and biography. The Stoic view from above is not a view from nowhere and does not erase the view from down there: it puts it into perspective.

This type of "spiritual knowledge" seems to have provided Foucault with a paradigm or, at least, a historical antecedent to his own late conception of philosophy as genealogy, namely as an *ars historica et politica* of a sort. This is what he suggests in the introduction of his first book dealing with antiquity:

But, then, what is philosophy today – philosophical activity, I mean – if it is not the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself? In what does it consist, if not in the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known? There is always something ludicrous in philosophical discourse when it tries, from the outside, to dictate to others, to tell them where their truth is and how to find it, or when it works up a case against them in the language of naive positivity. But it is entitled to explore what might be changed, in its own thought, through the practice of a knowledge that is foreign to it,

assuming, Foucault finally adds, "that philosophy is what it was in times past, i.e., an 'ascesis,' *askêsis*, an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought" (Foucault 1985: 8–9). Foucault clearly dismissed the idea that his study of ancient texts implied a nostalgic wish to imitate the ancients or offer them as models to be admired (Foucault 1991: 343–8). It is only in this passage concerning the aims and nature of philosophy that he acknowledges a continuity or, rather, the need to preserve or re-establish a continuity with ancient philosophy.

This confirms that Foucault's appropriation of Stoicism is as much ethical as epistemological, since it is concerned with the definition of knowledge as an art, in which truth is not an end in itself but a way of transforming oneself to act in the world. Foucault appears to find eventually in Stoicism something similar to what Deleuze put forward, namely an anti-Platonic conception of philosophy as an art capable of grasping what is happening to us here and now and of preparing us to make the best of it. Foucault thus describes the ancient Stoic as an "athlete of the event" (as opposed to the Christian "athlete of himself") and compares Stoic exercises to what can be found in Zen (Foucault 2001: 308, 213; 2005: 322, 222). This is clearly reminiscent of Deleuze's analysis of the Stoic sage's handling of events (Deleuze 1969: 171–2; 1990: 148–9), which already mentioned Zen. This is also consonant with Foucault's account of modernity as "the attitude that makes it possible to grasp the 'heroic' aspect of the present moment [...] the will to 'heroize' the present" (Foucault 1991: 40).<sup>11</sup> However, Stoicism is not to be identified with dandyism or Zen. In the same text, in which the main reference is Kant's *What Is Enlightenment?*, Foucault describes and advocates modern philosophy as "a critical ontology of ourselves," which "has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge [...], it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life" (Foucault 1993: 50). But Foucault emphasizes against Kant that "this critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are the possibility of no longer being, doing, or

thinking what we are, do, or think” (Foucault 1993: 46). This is yet another version of the distinction between the (Platonic) knowledge of the self and the (Hellenistic) care of the self, between *scientia* and *ars*, a distinction which is here clearly used by Foucault to define his own practice of history and philosophy as heir to Kant and Nietzsche and perhaps also, albeit implicitly, to the Stoics.

Consequently, Foucault’s historical inquiries into sexuality or prison might be seen as akin to Seneca’s *Natural Questions* (Foucault 2001: 260–73; 2005: 271–85), the difference being in the type of knowledge used – physics on the one hand, history on the other – and its objects, the common thread being in the *uses* made of this knowledge to unsettle ourselves, to locate ourselves in a wider frame of reference, to test the limits of our present experience in order to think and act differently here and now. This “historical ontology of ourselves” is akin to Stoicism not because they assert similar ontological, logical or ethical tenets in different contexts, but because they offer a similar type of connection between an inquiry about the context in which we become subjects and an attempt to change ourselves (May 2006: 177–82). Last but not least, this genealogical perspective itself requires an “archeological” standpoint substituting “historical events” for “universal structures” as causes of what we are (Foucault 1991: 46). In particular, subjectivity is not defined by fixed rules of constitution but is the product of “technologies of the self,” many of which contribute to the subjection of the self to specific powers but might be replaced by others (Foucault 1993: 222–3). Foucault’s inquiry into the Hellenistic “culture of the self,” and especially into Stoic exercises, thus draws our attention not only to a model for doing philosophy today, but also to a presupposition of this model, namely a conception of the self as technically fashioned, which has been nearly always overshadowed in mainstream philosophy (Plato, Descartes, Kant, Husserl) by a static notion of the self (or subject) as given (Potte-Bonneville 2004: 207–38; Jaffro, in Gros and Lévy 2003: 70–2). From this perspective, while Foucault does not approach Stoicism as a “philosophy of rationality” or “system,” neither does he cast it as a “philosophy of subject” in the sense of a philosophy presupposing a fixed subject as its object or norm, but rather as a philosophy of knowledge coupled with a technology of the self.

### Acknowledgements

I thank Layla Dargaud for her considerable help in finding and exploring the materials on which the first half of this chapter is based. As a matter of method, I deal only with authors who refer explicitly to ancient stoicism more than once or twice in published works (hence, for example, the absence of Bergson). All quotations of French texts are translated by myself, except when I refer to a published English translation.

### Notes

- 1 See among others Beaulieu 2005; Sellars 2006; Bowden 2011: 15–55; Gros and Lévy 2003: 17–116; May 2006; Bernini 2011.
- 2 From 1865 onward, the philosophy program always included at least one Stoic text (Seneca’s *De vita beata* or a selection of his letters or Epictetus’s *Enchiridion*) and sometimes more through Cicero (*De officiis*, for example). See Poucet 1999: 365–80.
- 3 Worms (2009: 228) quotes a symmetrical (i.e. mirror opposite) judgment by Alain about Kierkegaard’s existentialism: “Is it a philosophy? I do not think so. It is rather an outburst of mystical religion, a terror about my mission to exist offered without any explanation. What would Epictetus have thought?” Epictetus is here used as a criterion of philosophy, probably because of his rationalism and censure of passions (fear and agitation). This aspect of Stoicism was retained by Canguilhem, who was at first a disciple of Alain before turning away from his pacifism (see below).



- 4 The paradigm of this type of history of philosophy was Martial Gueroult's (1891–1976) *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons* (Goldschmidt 1953: 8), who was himself engaged in a fierce debate with Ferdinand Alquié's reading of Descartes' philosophy "in the first person," as a human experience irreducible to a system. Stoicism raised a similar debate, albeit discrete and disseminated.
- 5 Goldschmidt also constantly compares Stoic tenets to modern philosophers, not only Spinoza, a traditional reference, or Descartes and Leibniz, but Kierkegaard, Heidegger and, above all, Bergson (Goldschmidt 1953: 54–5).
- 6 Léon Brunschvicg (1869–1944) thus acknowledges that the Stoic discovery of human autonomy was based on a material conception of the soul included in a deterministic and nominalist naturalism, but still blames the Stoics for neglecting experience and mathematics, hence their empty science of nature, belief in divination or superficial logic (Brunschvicg 1953: I 84–5, first published in 1927).
- 7 In a rejoinder to Hamelin (1901), Brochard already noted that Stoicism should be compared to Leibniz (rather than Mill or Spinoza) because of his doctrine of hypothetical necessity (Brochard 1926: 246–7).
- 8 The point where Deleuze parts company with the Stoics (and Leibniz) most crucially is probably his conception (inspired by Nietzsche) of the "communication" between all events, which enter into diverging series forming "a 'chaosmos' and not a world" (Deleuze 1969: 206; 1990: 174), thus undercutting the Stoic notions of fate as the unifying reason according to which all events happen (Beaulieu 2005: 67–8; Sellars 2006: 167).
- 9 Stoic views (Hierocles, Musonius) about marriage are also analyzed in the 1980–81 lectures *Subjectivité et vérité*. Moreover, Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius are broached in the 1982–83 and 1983–84 lectures about frankness (*parresia*), *The Government of Self and Others* and *The Courage of Truth*, where Epictetus's representation of cynicism is studied by Foucault in some detail.
- 10 Note the famous opposition between *ars erotica* in oriental societies and "our civilization [...] the only one, most probably, to practice a *scientia sexualis*," which claims to decipher (rather than observe and transform) pleasures and uncover the deep meaning and hidden truth of sexuality through confession and self-examination (Foucault 1978: 57). Foucault later criticized this opposition and substituted ancient Greek self-mastery as a more relevant contrast to our approach to sex (Foucault 1991: 347–8).
- 11 Here, Foucault follows Baudelaire, who was already inspired by ancient "technologies of the self" (Wild, in Bernini 2011: 166–75): he noted for example that the dandy attitude is akin to Stoicism.

## Further reading

G. Verbeke, "La philosophie du signe chez les stoïciens," in J. Brunschwig (ed.), *Les stoïciens et leur logique* (Paris: Vrin, 2006), includes an account of the debate about Stoic logic between Brochard, Hamelin and Bréhier. V. Goldschmidt, "L'Ancien stoïcisme," in B. Parain (ed.), *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade*, vol. 1 of *Histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), republished in V. Goldschmidt, *Écrits*, vol. 1: *Études de philosophie ancienne* (Paris: Vrin, 1984), is a very original account of the Stoic system. C. Imbert, *Pour une histoire de la logique* (Paris: PUF, 1999), shows how Stoic logic's ties to psychology and physics make it different from modern formal logic. A. Cauquelin, *Fréquenter les incorporels* (Paris: PUF, 2006) is an original attempt to use the Stoic theory of incorporeals to analyze contemporary art. B. Inwood, "Seneca on Self-Assertion," in *Reading Seneca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) discusses Foucault's reading of Seneca and Plato's *Alcibiades* and his notion of the self. B. Seitz, "Foucault and the Subject of Stoic Existence," *Human Studies* 35 (2012): 539–54, compares Foucault's use of Stoicism and Sartre's existentialism.

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# THE STOIC INFLUENCE ON MODERN PSYCHOTHERAPY

*Donald J. Robertson*

## Introduction

During the Hellenistic period, most schools of philosophy had explicitly *therapeutic* goals. Of course, this largely meant psychological rather than physical therapy: “It is more necessary for the soul to be cured than the body, for it is better to die than to live badly” (Epictetus, fr. 32, in Epictetus 1995). The conception of philosophy as medicine for the soul, the root meaning of “psychotherapy,” goes back at least as far as Socrates, and was a commonplace by the Hellenistic period. Of these ancient schools of philosophy, Stoicism is the one most obviously related to modern psychotherapy. Although the Stoic goal was “living in agreement with nature,” meaning in accord with reason and virtue, it was considered self-evident that the *eudaimonia* of the ideal Sage was incompatible with the presence of emotional turmoil, and irrational fears and desires. The Stoics therefore developed a fairly extensive and sophisticated armamentarium of psychological strategies to help themselves progress toward not only virtue but also *apatheia*, freedom from irrational and unhealthy passions. What Epictetus called the “discipline of desire and aversion” can also be described as a, primarily *self*-administered, “therapy of the passions” or “Stoic psychotherapy.” Moreover, he advised his students that it was necessary for them to master this form of self-discipline before proceeding to study other aspects of Stoic theory and practice. He could therefore assert the medical analogy quite bluntly: “the philosopher’s school is a doctor’s clinic” (*Diss.* 3.23.30).

Among modern scholars, Pierre Hadot has provided a particularly detailed analysis of the numerous “spiritual” or therapeutic exercises to be found in ancient Stoic literature (Hadot 1998). However, he did not explore the undeniable similarity between these psychological strategies and those of *modern* psychotherapy. The comparison with psychotherapy should, of course, not be misunderstood as meaning that Stoics typically carried out the sort of individual treatment sessions that modern therapists do. In addition to being more self-guided, Stoicism was also largely “prophylactic” or *preventative*, whereas modern psychotherapy is mainly *remedial*. However, Stoicism has also had some influence on modern approaches to emotional “resilience-building” (Jarrett 2008; Robertson 2012). Nevertheless, these do tend to draw heavily on cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy techniques, modified to serve a preventative function. Indeed, research on individual psychotherapy has been the testing ground

from which more general-purpose psychological concepts and techniques, such as those employed in resilience-building programs, are derived.

However, the Stoics actually appear to have undertaken “therapeutic” processes in several different formats. Hence, the three main surviving bodies of Roman Stoic literature can be viewed as portraying Stoic training in ways *broadly* comparable to several different therapeutic modalities that exist today: the *Letters* of Seneca to Lucilius portray the advice and guidance of a Stoic mentor to a novice, which might be loosely compared to the modern relationship between a counselor or therapist and his clients in *individual treatment sessions*; the *Discourses* of Epictetus show him engaging in Socratic-type dialogues with students and visitors to his school, comparable to the so-called “Socratic” practices employed in some modern forms of therapeutic workshop or *group therapy*; the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius record his use of Stoic written and contemplative exercises, comparable to the modern practice of keeping a “therapy journal” or workbook for *psychological self-help*.

To this we might add the three “consolation” letters of Seneca, addressed to his mother and others, examples of a well-known “therapeutic” genre in the ancient world, which obviously resemble certain forms of modern self-help literature, particularly that containing advice for those struggling through challenges such as bereavement.

Moreover, there are hundreds of different schools of thought or “models” in modern psychotherapy. As noted above, the approach with the most explicit link to ancient philosophy, particularly Stoicism, is cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). This link with Stoicism is particularly notable in relation to CBT’s main precursor, and close relative, rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT). Albert Ellis, the founder of REBT, and Aaron T. Beck, the founder of “cognitive therapy,” the most common version of CBT, both described Stoicism as the main philosophical inspiration for their respective psychotherapies. For instance, in the first major CBT treatment manual, *Cognitive Therapy of Depression*, Beck and his colleagues wrote:

The philosophical origins of cognitive therapy can be traced back to the Stoic philosophers, particularly Zeno of Citium (fourth century B.C.), Chrysippus, Cicero,<sup>1</sup> Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. Epictetus wrote in *The Enchiridion*: “Men are disturbed not by things but by the views which they take of them.”

(Beck et al. 1979: 8)

If the *cause* of emotional disturbance is essentially cognitive this naturally implies a cognitive *cure*, and so they add that this Stoic premise leads them to the conclusion: “Control of most intense feelings may be achieved by changing one’s ideas.”

Indeed, the “fairly impressive convergence” between Stoicism and modern psychotherapy with regard to the essentially *cognitive* nature of emotions (Becker 2004: 254–5) explains most of the similarities between them. Consequently, “Stoic psychotherapy is a form of cognitive therapy – an effort to focus on, and then to correct, the cognitive errors that underwrite pathology” (Becker 2004: 257). If two theories accept the central role of cognition in determining our emotions as their premise, they are likely to arrive at broadly similar conclusions regarding the best strategies for achieving therapeutic change. As we shall see, the cognitive theory of emotions, and indeed the particular quotation from Epictetus cited by Beck, is the aspect of ancient Stoicism that is most familiar to modern CBT practitioners, and which exerts the most explicit influence over their theory and practice. This probably encapsulates the most important point of contact between the two traditions.

So what is the main thing modern psychotherapy *omits* in contrast to Stoicism? As the word “therapy” implies, it is predominantly based on the remedy of disorder and lacks the

Stoic emphasis on envisaging the goal of life in positive terms, by contemplating the ideal Sage or historical individuals, such as Zeno or Socrates, who approached wisdom and virtue without necessarily achieving perfection. One reason modern psychotherapists are often interested in Stoicism therefore is that it provides the broader conception of a rational “art of living,” in the service of a specific philosophical goal, embodied in the concept of the ideal Sage.

There are countless interesting parallels between Stoic practices and modern psychotherapy techniques (Robertson 2010). This chapter will provide an overview of the influence of Stoicism on modern psychotherapy, with special emphasis on CBT as the area where this relationship is most noteworthy and pronounced. As Still and Dryden conclude, historians of philosophy are already in the habit of referring to Stoicism, and other ancient philosophies, as resembling modern psychotherapy in a general sense but it may bring more precision to these discussions to focus on REBT, or later CBT, as providing the closest analogy (Still and Dryden 2012: 21).

### Early psychotherapy and the Serenity Prayer

In the early twentieth century, the Swiss psychiatrist Paul Dubois founded a “rational persuasion” approach to psychotherapy, which is largely forgotten today but which prefigured modern CBT in many respects (Dubois 1909). Dubois frequently quoted the Stoics and even prescribed reading the letters of Seneca to his patients. He was particularly committed to a philosophy of causal determinism, linked to Stoicism, which he felt played an important role in helping his patients to mitigate their frustrations with life. The eclectic psychotherapist Charles Baudouin, influenced by Dubois, subsequently published *The Inner Discipline*, which contains a whole chapter dedicated to the relevance of Stoic philosophy for modern psychotherapy (Baudouin and Lestchinsky 1924). Curiously, both Dubois and Baudouin placed greater emphasis than subsequent CBT authors did on the fundamental Stoic distinction between what is under our control and what is not.

Indeed, the opening sentence of the *Enchiridion* is: “Some things are up to us and others are not” (*Ench.* 1). The first of the *Discourses* is likewise entitled “On what is in our power, and what is not” (*Diss.* 1.1). The importance of distinguishing between things “up to us” and things not is the central theme of Epictetus’s Stoicism and it may perhaps articulate a notion fundamental to Stoic Ethics since the time of the original Athenian school. Epictetus repeatedly emphasizes that his Stoic students should have this principle always ready-to-hand and that it leads naturally to the “philosophical attitude” toward adversity for which the Stoics were renowned:

What, then, is to be done? To make the best of what is in our power, and take the rest as it naturally happens.

(*Diss.* 1.1.17)

Most modern therapists are familiar with the broadly similar advice contained in the “Serenity Prayer,” popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous in the 1940s, and widely used in modern therapy and self-help literature since that time.

God grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference.

The origins of the Serenity Prayer are obscure and contentious, although it allegedly derives from a very similar prayer written by the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr in

the 1930s (Pietsch 1990: 9). Nevertheless, the resemblance both to Stoic doctrine and terminology is unmistakable to anyone familiar with the literature on the subject. Many psychotherapists, particularly CBT practitioners, are acquainted with the Serenity Prayer and would recognize Stoicism as teaching something broadly analogous.

### **Rational-emotive behavior therapy**

However, modern CBT (cognitive-behavioral therapy) is generally viewed as beginning around the mid-1950s, when Ellis developed the approach, later known as REBT (rational-emotive behavior therapy). His early work culminated in the publication of *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy* (Ellis 1962), a collection of articles intended for therapists, and his popular self-help book *A Guide to Rational Living* (1961), co-authored with Robert A. Harper (3rd edn, Ellis and Harper 1997). REBT bears the most striking resemblance to Stoicism of any modern psychotherapy. The extent of REBT's indebtedness to ancient Stoicism, both in terms of theory and practice, has been the focus of two recent books (Robertson 2010; Still and Dryden 2012). For the sake of brevity, it is probably best to provide an outline of some of the most obvious areas of comparison:

- 1 REBT practitioners often oriented clients to their role in therapy by teaching them the quotation from Epictetus above ("Men are disturbed not by things ..."); this expresses a recurring practical *strategy* in Stoicism, which involves frequently reminding ourselves, especially when becoming upset, that our emotions are due primarily to our own beliefs, in order to gain psychological "distance" from them.
- 2 Both REBT and Stoicism therefore agree that our emotions are primarily determined by our beliefs or thinking (cognition) and that beliefs and emotions may be two *aspects* of a single process rather than two distinct processes in the mind.
- 3 REBT trains clients to closely monitor the relationship between their thoughts, actions, and feelings, when becoming upset, which is similar to the Stoic emphasis on continual attention (*prosochē*) to one's faculty of judgment.
- 4 REBT's main technique is the *rational* or "Socratic" disputation of irrational demands, sometimes referred to as the client's underlying "philosophy" of life; this is comparable to the philosophical disputation of our fundamental value judgments in Stoicism.
- 5 REBT encourages a *threefold* attitude of tolerance or acceptance toward oneself, other people, and the world, as imperfect; this is comparable to the threefold emphasis on accepting our body, other people, and external events as "indifferent" in Stoicism.
- 6 REBT's central claim that irrational *demands* or "must" statements lie at the root of emotional disturbance resembles the Stoic emphasis on the centrality of mistaken value judgments concerning what is unconditionally "good" or "bad" in life.
- 7 Ellis's notion that there are rational and healthy emotions, which we should aspire to cultivate instead of our irrational ones, clearly resembles the Stoic notion of "healthy passions" (*eupatheiai*).
- 8 REBT's concept of replacing absolutistic demands with flexible "desires" or "preferences" resembles the Stoic concept of the "reserve clause," which attributes "selective value" to external events, for the purpose of making plans, while accepting that they may not turn out as we would prefer.
- 9 REBT's opposition to "awfulizing," or judging events to be absolutely catastrophic, resembles the Stoic opposition to judging external events to be unconditionally "bad" or "evil"; this strategy is often called "decatastrophizing" events in CBT.

- 10 The main imagery technique employed in REBT, called “rational-emotive imagery” (REI), clearly resembles the Stoic practice of *praemeditatio malorum*; both involve repeatedly picturing future setbacks or loss, as if happening now, in order to reduce anxiety and build psychological resilience to potentially stressful events.

Indeed, overall, Ellis described REBT as a “philosophical” approach to therapy, and its fundamental goal as “rational living,” which we might compare to the Stoic goal of living “in accord with reason,” or prudently and wisely (Diog. Laert. 7.86). By “inducing the patient to internalize a rational philosophy of life,” in other words, REBT aims to directly uproot and counteract the core irrational beliefs developed from childhood (Ellis 1962: 65).

By direct statement and implication, then, modern thinkers are tending to recognize the fact that logic and reason can, and in a sense must, play a most important role in overcoming human neurosis. Eventually, they may be able to catch up with Epictetus in this respect, who wrote – some nineteen centuries ago – that “the chief concern of a wise and good man is his own reason.”

(Ellis 1962: 109)

Although we cannot be entirely certain, it seems unlikely that the many similarities between REBT and Stoicism are all merely coincidental. We are told that prior to becoming a psychotherapist, Ellis himself “read the later Stoics, Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius, who were readily available in cheap translations” (Still and Dryden 2012: xii–xiii). He referred many times to Stoicism and frequently made its general influence on his own approach explicit. For instance, in his first major book on rational psychotherapy, he said of the central REBT premise that irrational beliefs are the core of “neurotic” disorders:

This principle, which I have inducted from many psychotherapeutic sessions with scores of patients during the last several years, was originally discovered and stated by the ancient Stoic philosophers, especially Zeno of Citium (the founder of the school), Chrysippus, Panaetius of Rhodes (who introduced Stoicism into Rome), Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. The truths of Stoicism were perhaps best set forth by Epictetus, who in the first century A.D. wrote in the *Enchiridion*: “Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them.” Shakespeare, many centuries later, rephrased this thought in *Hamlet*: “There’s nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so.”

(Ellis 1962: 54)

Moreover, earlier in the same book, Ellis said:

Many of the principles incorporated in the theory of rational-emotive psychotherapy are not new; some of them, in fact, were originally stated several thousand years ago, especially by the Greek and Roman Stoic philosophers (such as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius) [...] What probably is new is the application to psychotherapy of viewpoints [such as these] that were first propounded in radically different contexts.

(Ellis 1962: 35)

Ellis even went so far as to say: “I am happy to say that in the 1950s I managed to bring Epictetus out of near-obscurity and make him famous all over again” (Ellis and MacLaren

2005: 10). This is probably an exaggeration, though Epictetus's writings have experienced a notable resurgence in popularity since the 1970s (Long 2002: 2).

Ellis originally called this approach “rational therapy,” then “rational-emotive therapy,” and finally “rational-emotive behavior therapy.” The name was apparently meant to denote an emphasis upon the three main response systems: reason (thoughts), emotion (feelings), and behavior (actions). This might, incidentally, be compared to Epictetus's distinction, in Stoic practice, between the three interrelated “disciplines” of assent (judgment), desire and aversion (passion), and impulse (action). However, most notably, Ellis made the famous quotation from Epictetus's *Enchiridion* a kind of *slogan* of REBT: “Men are disturbed not by things but by the views which they take of them.” He taught it to patients as an integral part of what we now term the initial “socialization” phase of therapy, during which they learn about the basic concepts and strategies employed by the particular style of therapy they're embarking upon. In other words, the quote from Epictetus was actually used to help *define* the client's fundamental role for them in treatment – making it far more important than a passing reference.

### **Rational emotions, “preference,” and the “reserve clause”**

For most subsequent cognitive-behavioral therapists, particularly Beck, different types of dysfunctional cognition, such as unfounded assumptions or overgeneralizations, may lead to emotional disturbance. However, Ellis argued that the essence of unhealthy or “neurotic” emotions is that they are based upon irrational, rigid, and absolute demands placed on oneself, the world, or other people. These “devout, absolutistic evaluations” of events in life were interpreted as a particular type of cognition. They are essentially *unconditional imperatives*, typically framed in terms of dogmatic “must,” “should,” “have to,” “got to,” “ought to” statements, i.e. they are implicitly value judgments (Dryden and Ellis 2001: 301).

So REBT [rational-emotive behavior therapy] encourages your clients to feel strongly about succeeding at important tasks and relationships, but not to fall into the human propensity to raise their strong desires to absolutistic demands – “I *must* succeed or else I am worthless!” These produce dysfunctional negative feelings, especially panic and depression, that block their desires.

*(Ellis and MacLaren 2005: 21)*

Even if I falsely conclude that everyone hates me, an irrational overgeneralization, I could still say “So what?” to myself and dismiss it without becoming upset – in order to become neurotically upset, according to Ellis, I must refuse to accept that they hate me and implicitly *demand* that things be otherwise. In his early self-help book, *A Guide to Rational Living*, Ellis draws on the Stoics to make the point that such rigid demands, particularly when imposed on other people, are bound to cause emotional disturbance, in part, because they fail to distinguish between what is “up to us” and what is not.

As Epictetus pointed out two thousand years ago, although you do have considerable power to change and control yourself, you rarely can control the behavior of others. No matter how wisely you may counsel people, they are independent persons and may – and, indeed, have the right to – ignore you completely. If, therefore, you unduly arouse yourself over the way others act, instead of taking responsibility for how you respond to them, you often will upset yourself over an uncontrollable event.

*(Ellis and Harper 1997: 198)*



The rational alternative is a more moderate attitude of “desire” or “preference,” e.g. “I would definitely *prefer* to pass this exam but if I don’t it is not the end of the world,” rather than “I absolutely *must* pass this exam (otherwise it would be awful)!”

REBT theory argues that a philosophy of relativism or “desiring” is a central feature of psychologically healthy humans. This philosophy acknowledges that humans have a large variety of desires, wishes, wants, preferences, and so on, but that if they refuse to transform these non-absolute values into grandiose dogmas and demands, they will not become psychologically disturbed. They will, however, experience healthy negative emotions (e.g., sadness, regret, disappointment, healthy anger or annoyance) whenever their desires are not fulfilled.

(Dryden and Ellis 2001: 305)

The Stoics warn us that judging external things to be intrinsically “good” or “bad,” and seeking too strongly to get or avoid them, is the basis of all irrational and unhealthy passions. It is not difficult to spot the similarity between this and Ellis’s talk about the neurotic demand that something “must” or “must not” happen. Indeed, to explain this problem, Ellis draws on one of the early passages from the *Enchiridion* dealing with this in his REBT self-help guidance:

Try not to exaggerate the importance or significance of things. Your favorite cup, as Epictetus noted many centuries ago, merely represents a cup that you like. Your wife and children, however delightful, remain mortals. Don’t take a defensive “so-what” attitude and falsely tell yourself, “So what if I break my cup, or my wife and children die? Who cares?” For you’d better care for your cup and your wife and children, in order to lead a more zestful life. But if you exaggeratedly convince yourself that this is the *only* cup in the world or that your life would be completely empty without your wife and children, you will overestimate their value and make yourself needlessly vulnerable to their possible loss.

(Ellis and Harper 1997: 174)

The Stoics describe the healthy alternative as attributing “selective value” to external things, without judging them intrinsically “good” or “bad,” and “preferring” that something does or does not happen, which appears similar to Ellis’s notion of “rational preference.” Moreover, the “reserve clause,” which appears closely related to the concept of rational wishing or willing (*boulêsis*) in Stoicism, also resembles the notion of “rational preference” in REBT. For Ellis, rational preferences differ from absolute demands in that they entail an acceptance of the possibility that things might turn out against one’s wishes, much like the Stoic reserve clause. He sometimes explicitly quoted the Stoic doctrine of acceptance, and did so very approvingly.

If you face great frustrations and there seems no way to change them, then you had better gracefully *accept* them. Yes: not with bitterness and despair, but with dignity and grace. As Epictetus noted two thousand years ago: “Who, then, is unconquerable? He whom the inevitable cannot overcome.”

(Ellis and Harper 1997: 145)

However, he warned that, from the perspective of REBT the Stoic “philosophy of acceptance” can itself become too rigid or extreme, and should only be interpreted as beneficial when pursued within certain “sensible” limits (Ellis and Harper 1997: 145).

### **Rational-emotive imagery and *praemeditatio malorum***

One of the most notable psychological imagery techniques found in the ancient Stoic literature is known as the *praemeditatio malorum*, or premeditation of adversity (Hadot 2002: 137). Foucault described this as an ancient psychotherapeutic procedure divided into three distinct components:

*First*, it is not a question of imagining the future as it is likely to turn out but to imagine the worst that can happen, even if there's little chance it will turn out that way – the worst as certainty, as actualizing what could happen, not as calculation of probability.

*Second*, one shouldn't envisage things as possibly taking place in the distant future but as already actual and in the process of taking place. For example, imagining not that one might be exiled but rather that one is already exiled, subjected to torture, and dying.

*Third*, one does this not in order to experience inarticulate sufferings but in order to convince oneself that they are not real ills. The reduction of all that is possible, of all the duration and of all the misfortunes, reveals not something bad but what we have to accept.

*(Foucault 1988: 36)*

This can be compared to *many* different techniques found in modern psychotherapy but perhaps bears the most striking resemblance to the main imagery technique of REBT, called REI (rational-emotive imagery). This requires the client to patiently confront relevant upsetting situations in her imagination in order to learn a more rational and less catastrophic attitude toward them. There are several variations; however, Ellis described the technique to clients as follows:

Use rational-emotive imagery to vividly imagine unpleasant activating events before they happen; let yourself feel unhealthily upset (anxious, depressed, enraged, or guilty) as you imagine them; then work on your feelings to change them to appropriate emotions (concern, sadness, healthy anger, or remorse) as you keep imagining some of the worst things happening. Don't give up until you actually do change your feelings.

*(Ellis and MacLaren 2005: 125–6)*

Often such imagery techniques focus on specific situations that the client is facing as part of their current problem. Other cognitive-behavioral therapists influenced by Ellis have described similar imagery techniques, dubbed “anti-future shock imagery” or “emotional fire drills,” which are intended to promote more general and long-lasting emotional *resilience* by “inoculating” the client against a broader range of potential future adversities (Lazarus 1981: 242; Meichenbaum 2007). This extension of imagery techniques such as REI, beyond the remedial goals of conventional psychotherapy and into the wider domain of psychological resilience-building, bears most resemblance to many Stoic passages concerning *praemeditatio malorum*. For example, Seneca responds to a terrible calamity suffered by one of his friends with the following advice:

What is quite unlooked for is more crushing in its effect, and unexpectedness adds to the weight of a disaster. The fact that it was unforeseen has never failed to

intensify a person's grief. This is a reason for ensuring that nothing ever takes us by surprise. We should project our thoughts ahead of us at every turn and have in mind every possible eventuality instead of only the usual course of events. [...] This is why we need to envisage every possibility and to strengthen the spirit to deal with the things which may conceivably come about. Rehearse them in your mind: exile, torture, war, shipwreck.

(Ep. 91, in Seneca 2004: 178)

Ellis's use of such mental-imagery techniques and the proven success of similar "imaginal-exposure" strategies in early behavior therapy led Beck and other CBT authors to also prescribe mental-"review" techniques for the purposes of decatastrophizing anticipated setbacks. For example:

By [mentally] reviewing what he fears, the patient is able to start to accept the possibility of the feared event. In the reviewing process, he is counteracting his avoidance tendency. At the start of one review, the patient, who was afraid of growing old, thought, "It's too terrible to face. I can't believe this is happening." Later she was able to imagine directly, with minimal anxiety, what it would be like to be old. The reviewing process gets the patient to face the reality of the situation and makes it easier to accept.

(Beck et al. 2005: 250)

### **Cognitive-behavioral therapy**

Ellis's work, as we have seen, was closely followed by Beck's development of "cognitive therapy," which, especially in its earliest forms, drew heavily on the theory and practice of REBT. REBT and cognitive therapy were frequently combined with behavior therapy and so, as numerous variations evolved, by the mid-1980s it had become common to refer to this broad group of related approaches as "cognitive-behavioral therapy." (In a sense, therefore, CBT should be viewed as a *plural* term because it encompasses several distinct therapies.) However, Beck's approach provided, to some extent, a common framework shared by the majority of CBT practitioners, at least until the late 1990s and the subsequent growth of alternative "third-wave" approaches.

There is no evidence of Stoicism exerting the same *direct* influence that it had over Ellis on major authors in the field of CBT. Nevertheless, Stoicism did continue to exert an *indirect* influence over the early development of CBT, mediated by its precursor REBT. Beck therefore mentions the Stoics several times, largely echoing Ellis's comments. For example, he opened his first book on cognitive therapy, *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders* (1976), with the claim that this new treatment approach had evolved out of an emerging consensus among researchers that our emotions and behavior are fundamentally determined cognitively, by our beliefs and patterns of thinking.

Nevertheless, the philosophical underpinnings go back thousands of years, certainly to the time of the Stoics, who considered man's conceptions (or misconceptions) of events rather than the events themselves as the key to his emotional upsets.

(Beck 1976: 3)

Although he acknowledges the Stoics as his ultimate precursors, Beck doesn't explicitly engage with their theory or practices. Nevertheless, he used the famous quotation from

Epictetus mentioned above as the motto of his chapter on “Meaning and Emotions” and likewise quoted Marcus Aurelius’s saying:

If thou are pained by any external thing, it is not the thing that disturbs thee, but thine own judgment about it. And it is in thy power to wipe out this judgment now.

*(Marcus Aurelius 8.47, as quoted in Beck 1976: 263)*

Through the combination of this shared “cognitive” theory of emotional disturbance and the influence of Ellis’s REBT, several key concepts and techniques of Beck’s “cognitive therapy” ended up bearing a striking, though largely *unacknowledged*, resemblance to those of ancient Stoic therapy. In particular, based upon this premise that our judgments (cognitions) largely determine our emotional disturbance, Beck concludes that the central technique of cognitive therapy should be a form of what he calls “Socratic questioning” or disputation of dysfunctional beliefs.

As Long has shown, the *Discourses* of Epictetus appear to show that Stoic teachers explicitly employed the Socratic method of testing and refuting the assumptions of their students, known as the *elenchus* (Long 2002). Likewise, according to Beck and his colleagues, “Cognitive therapy uses primarily the Socratic method” (Beck et al. 2005: 167). Indeed, a common feature of most “rational” psychotherapies, from Dubois to Ellis, is that they view themselves as employing a broadly “Socratic” method of questioning, and so this expression is very familiar to all CBT practitioners. However, Beck’s cognitive therapy makes the greatest use of this approach, by emphasizing such questions as:

- Where is the evidence for that belief?
- What are the pros and cons of that belief or behavior?
- What errors might be involved in your thinking about that situation?
- What is an alternative way of looking at things?

This differs somewhat from the style of questioning employed by Socrates (and Epictetus), which tended to focus more on the process of uncovering internal *contradictions* in the interlocutor’s belief system. However, in addition to some of the similarities noted above in relation to REBT, cognitive therapists following Beck developed many additional methods for helping clients to question their own problematic assumptions, which overlap with the kind of philosophical *self-analysis* found in ancient Stoicism.

### **“Mindfulness” and “third-wave” CBT**

Psychotherapists sometimes speak of three successive “waves” or movements within the broad field of CBT. The “first wave,” consisting of early behavior therapy, from the late 1950s to mid-1970s, was followed by the “second wave” consisting of cognitive therapy and other REBT-inspired approaches, flourishing from the late 1970s to early 1990s, which was followed by a “third wave” of cognitive and behavioral therapies, from around the mid-1990s onward. These include, for example, acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), metacognitive therapy, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, behavioral activation, functional analytic psychotherapy, dialectical behavior therapy, and several other treatment approaches (Hayes et al. 2004). Some of these newer therapies draw more on the behavioral tradition and some on cognitive psychology so they form quite a diverse cluster of approaches. However, what they tend to have in common is the view that REBT and Beck’s cognitive therapy lacked

sufficient attention to the way we consciously *relate* to our thoughts as psychological events. They also tend to be influenced by the concept of “mindfulness,” loosely derived from Buddhist meditation practices.

Ironically, however, a form of mindfulness practice was central to ancient Stoicism and this is perhaps one of the most notable elements of Stoic practice neglected by Ellis and Beck. In other words, modern psychotherapists did not need to look as far afield as India or East Asia, and assimilate mindfulness from Buddhism, because it was already present in the Stoic “philosophical origins” of CBT. Although mindfulness-related themes run throughout the Stoic literature, the most closely related term is *prosochê*, meaning “attention” to consciousness and the process of forming judgments, especially one’s value judgments about specific events in life.

Attention (*prosochê*) is the fundamental Stoic spiritual attitude. It is a continuous vigilance and presence of mind, self-consciousness which never sleeps, and a constant tension of the spirit. Thanks to this attitude, the philosopher is fully aware of what he does at each instant, and he *wills* his actions fully.

(Hadot 1995: 84)

For example, ACT (acceptance and commitment therapy), one of the most important third-wave approaches, evolved out of research on the psychological strategy of “cognitive distancing” found in Beck’s earliest writings on cognitive therapy. ACT was originally called “comprehensive distancing” because of the emphasis placed on this concept, although it later broadened its scope considerably and became a fully fledged therapeutic model in its own right. Beck had originally said quite simply: “The process of regarding thoughts objectively is labelled distancing” (Beck 1976: 243). He added that cognitive “distance” is the ability to regard one’s position in terms of “I believe” rather than “I know.” Distancing is therefore the client’s ability to treat her own thoughts as hypotheses and so the word alludes to the notion of metaphorically “taking a step back” when observing one’s thoughts.

Take, for example, a patient who, for no justifiable reason, has the thought, “That man is my enemy.” If he automatically equates the thought with reality, his distancing is poor. If he can regard the idea as a hypothesis or inference, rather than accept it as fact, he is distancing well.

(Beck 1976: 243)

Beck elsewhere defined “distancing” in cognitive therapy as a “metacognitive” process, a shift to a level of awareness involving “thinking *about* thinking,” which he defined succinctly as follows:

“Distancing” refers to the ability to view one’s own thoughts (or beliefs) as constructions of “reality” rather than as reality itself.

(Alford and Beck 1997: 142)

In CBT, clients are usually “socialized” or introduced to this notion through the use of simple diagrams or metaphors. For example, they may be taught that when thoughts distort our perception of events it is like we are wearing colored spectacles. When we gain cognitive distance from our own thoughts, it is as though we are taking off the spectacles and looking *at* them, rather than looking *through* them. A similar “distancing” mechanism has been seen as integral to mindfulness meditation practices which have been found effective in the treatment

of depression, and were therefore integrated with some forms of CBT. A similar concept, or psychological technique, can also be found recurring throughout the surviving Stoic literature.

Indeed, it might be argued that Stoicism actually placed more emphasis on something akin to “cognitive distancing” than upon direct *disputation* of beliefs. This may have been somewhat overlooked by scholars because “distancing” is a more subtle and elusive concept than disputation. One of the passages that stands out most in this regard occurs right at the start of the *Enchiridion*, where Epictetus writes:

Train yourself, therefore, at the very outset to say to every harsh impression: “You are merely an impression [*phantasia*] and not at all what you appear to be [*phainomenon*].”

(Ench. 1)

Alternatively, perhaps more literally: “You are an appearance and not in any way the *thing* appearing.” Stoic students were to repeat this verbal formula to themselves as part of a general-purpose psychological strategy for managing disturbing impressions and incipient passions. The fact that this occurs in the first passage of the *Enchiridion* may also signal its importance. It is presented, as in CBT, as a prelude to other strategies, which involve “testing” the impression. The Stoics and Beck appear to have shared the realization that disputation of one’s thoughts is impossible unless preceded by the initial step of gaining “psychological distance” from them. I have to be able to view my judgments as *hypotheses* (merely impressions) rather than as *facts* (confusing them with the things they claim to represent), before I can adopt a philosophical attitude toward them, and question them rationally.

In relation to this, Epictetus also refers numerous times to the strategy of avoiding “being carried away” (*sunarpasthêis*) by impressions in general, and not letting them seize the mind prematurely. He specifically refers to impressions that attribute good or bad to indifferent things, such as pleasure, other people’s happiness, insulting behavior, or fearful prophecies, etc.

When you get an impression of some pleasure, guard yourself, as with impressions in general, against being carried away by it; nay, let the matter wait upon your leisure, and give yourself a little delay.

(Ench. 34)

And so make it your primary endeavour not to be carried away by the impression; for if once you gain time and delay, you will more easily become master of yourself.

(Ench. 20)

This delaying tactic resembles “time-out” or “postponement” strategies used in modern CBT, which require cognitive distance from an automatic thought, and the ability to defer thinking any more about it or acting upon it until later. Another reason this works well is clearly due to the fact that emotional disturbances (“passions”) tend to come and go naturally and so returning to a thought at a later time, in a different “frame of mind,” generally makes it easier to evaluate it more objectively – when the “anxiety mode” is no longer activated, as Beck now puts it. The ability to gain “cognitive distance” in this way has become one of the common themes across different third-wave approaches to CBT because research suggests it may be more therapeutically important than actively *disputing* upsetting thoughts.

## Conclusion

The influence of Stoicism on modern psychotherapy is complex and sometimes indirect or obscure. However, “rational” psychotherapists in the early twentieth century, particularly Dubois and Baudouin, drew very explicitly upon the writings of the three best-known Roman Stoic authors: Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. In the latter half of the twentieth century, Ellis and Beck both clearly stated that the “philosophical origins” of CBT lay in ancient Stoicism. However, Ellis refers to the Stoics more frequently than Beck, and there are many more important parallels between REBT and Stoicism, which seem likely to be due, at least in part, to Ellis’s reading of Stoic literature as a youth. REBT, in turn, exerted considerable influence over Beck and other early cognitive-behavioral therapists. Important analogies between CBT and Stoicism, both in terms of theory and practice, can perhaps be attributed to the influence of ancient Stoicism as *mediated* through what’s been dubbed “the legacy of Epictetus” within Ellis’s REBT (Still and Dryden 2012).

Someone might object: “It is clear that CBT borrows the quotation from Epictetus about our judgments being the thing that upsets us rather than external events, but isn’t that the *only* thing it borrows?” However, we might reply that even if that were the only borrowing, it’s so *fundamental* that it has been said Ellis derived the very “cornerstone” of REBT from Stoicism (Still and Dryden 2012: 203). The same would apply to Beck’s cognitive therapy, for which the “cognitive model of emotion,” derived from the Stoics, is absolutely central. Moreover, because it is so foundational, that premise, which Ellis first derived from Stoicism, inevitably leads CBT authors to arrive at many similar conclusions to the Stoics, regarding both theory and practice (Robertson 2010).

So this alone would be enough to justify us in highlighting the influence of Stoicism on CBT and that is essentially why both Ellis and Beck identified Stoicism as the main philosophical inspiration for their approach. However, in reality, the extent of Stoicism’s influence is much greater: the CBT literature contains many *other* explicit references to Stoicism. To take the example mentioned earlier, both Ellis and Beck prescribe the verbal *re-description* of upsetting events in purely objective terms, which Hadot called the Stoic technique of “physical definition” (Ellis and Harper 1997: 174). Detailed overviews of various other similarities have been published elsewhere (Robertson 2010; Still and Dryden 2012). Moreover, two of the most important *verbal* and *visual* techniques employed in conventional REBT and CBT, namely the numerous variations of Socratic questioning and “exposure-based” (or decatastrophizing) imagery techniques, are both clearly similar to important Stoic practices.

Ellis had apparently read the accounts of Epictetus employing “Socratic questioning” in the *Discourses* to challenge the irrational assumptions at the root of his interlocutor’s distress, such as the father who fled his sick child’s bedside (*Diss.* 1.11). It has therefore been claimed that the development of the Socratic method in REBT, which was the main source for this style of questioning throughout subsequent CBT, “may have been influenced by the dialogic nature of Epictetus’ practice” (Still and Dryden 2012: 205). Although he does not explicitly say so, when reading the Stoics, Ellis probably encountered their descriptions of the technique Seneca calls *praemeditatio malorum*. As we have seen, this bears a striking resemblance to REI and the decatastrophizing imagery techniques later described by Beck. These two basic strategies, in some form or another, became mainstays of most subsequent forms of CBT.

In conclusion, let us note that the historical relationship between Stoicism and CBT remains *important* for several reasons. There are many other therapeutic strategies and techniques to be found in the Stoic literature, which may have the potential to enhance current CBT practice. On the other hand, countless volumes of research have been published on CBT,

leading to undeniable scientific progress. These findings may potentially suggest improvements that are required, in light of empirical evidence, to Stoic psychology. In some cases they may actually shed greater light on what the ancient Stoics originally had in mind. For instance, as we have seen, from the late 1990s onward, a new generation of researchers and therapists contributed to the emergence of a third-wave of CBT. These therapies are loosely united by the consensus that something was lacking from the preceding approaches of Ellis, Beck, and others. In particular, they tended to see psychological processes at work in Buddhist “mindfulness” meditation that provided an alternative to the established therapeutic strategies of “disputing” problematic cognitions. Although there is apparently no evidence of Stoicism having a *direct* influence over the third-wave therapies, they do ultimately stand in the CBT tradition, which still bears traces of the initial injection of Stoicism provided courtesy of Ellis and REBT. Moreover, one of their main *innovations* has been to introduce an emphasis on mindfulness that, coincidentally, makes third-wave CBT resemble aspects of Stoicism that conventional CBT largely overlooked. In particular, these mindfulness processes can be compared to the Stoic concept of *prosochê* or continual “attention” to the seat of one’s own voluntary mental activity, i.e. judgments and impulses to action, etc. Some of the resulting conceptual developments and empirical findings could even contribute to our understanding of ancient Stoicism. Perhaps modern psychology is only now *rediscovering* obscure psychological mechanisms, which the ancient Stoics may have understood better than their modern commentators.

### Note

- 1 Cicero, strictly speaking, identifies himself as an Academic rather than a Stoic, although his knowledge of Stoicism was extensive and he is, of course, one of our major sources regarding ancient Stoic philosophy.

### Further reading

The most notable early twentieth-century attempt to integrate Stoic philosophy and rational psychotherapy is C. Baudouin and A. Lestchinsky, *The Inner Discipline* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924). A. Ellis, *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, 1962) is a seminal collection of articles introducing rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT), the Stoicism-inspired precursor to modern cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). D. J. Robertson, *The Philosophy of Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT): Stoic Philosophy as Rational and Cognitive Psychotherapy* (London: Karnac, 2010) is a book-length analysis of the historical and conceptual relationship between Stoic philosophy and modern CBT. W. Still and W. Dryden, *The Historical and Philosophical Context of Rational Psychotherapy: The Legacy of Epictetus* (London: Karnac, 2012) is a collection of articles co-authored by two prominent authorities on REBT, dealing with the influence of Stoicism.

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